

Teachers' and Parents' perspectives towards
including "slow learners" in mainstream schools in
Kuwait

Nouf Alenezi

January 2016

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Education
University of Stirling**

Abstract

This qualitative research inquiry explores the perspectives of a diverse range of participants, namely head teachers, teachers and mothers, towards inclusion of "slow learners" in two primary mainstream schools in the State of Kuwait. The concept of inclusion, through a review of major issues and limitations in the current practice of inclusion is highlighted by this case study. A multi-method data collection approach, using semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis of the policy document for inclusion in Kuwait, has led to identifying what has been done, so far in practice, for inclusion, as well as identifying the potential changes that need to be made.

Kuwait is a signatory to the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, set out in 1994, which requires states to move towards systems "enabling schools to serve all children". However, to date, "inclusion" in Kuwaiti mainstream schools is limited to two groups of children: those with Down's Syndrome and those referred to as "slow learners", a term used to describe certain children with low IQ. All other children with special educational needs are educated in segregated settings. This study examines policy and explores participants' perspectives towards the inclusion of children identified as "slow learners" in primary mainstream schools in Kuwait, in order to arrive at insights which might further the policy and practice of supporting inclusion of children with special educational needs. This study found that the dominant conceptual model underpinning policy and practice in Kuwait is the "medical model" of disability, as the current understanding and practice of inclusion, teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion and articulation of the inclusion policy in Kuwait is informed, conceptualized and affected by this model. This understanding lends itself to practices of integration rather than inclusion. However, "the term 'inclusion' replaced 'integration' and is often contrasted with 'exclusion' " (Topping & Maloney, 2005, p.42). Inclusion means equal access and increasing the participation of students with special needs in mainstream school as promoted by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO,1994), while integration means limited access and less participation of students with special needs in mainstream school, thus integration is "largely a 'disability' or SEN issue" (Topping & Maloney, 2005, p.42). This study also found that perspectives of inclusion are influenced by the social, cultural and religious context of the country.

Finally, this study concludes that in the context of Kuwait, there is a clear effect of the cultural understanding of disability on the way that the current policy of inclusive education is represented. Such cultural influence not only affects the policymakers of the region and the way inclusion is implemented, but also it effects "slow learners" in the light of how disability and inclusion are constructed by the head teachers, teachers and mothers in this study. Such cultural and social values and beliefs of Kuwaiti culture pose obstacles to the existence of inclusion in Kuwait, as promoted by the Salamanca Statement. As a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, this study suggests that in order to adequately accommodate "slow learners" and other students with disability in mainstream schools in Kuwait, policy needs to be reconceptualised.

Acknowledgments

I thank Allah for grace and mercy upon me, providing me with energy and support to undertake this journey.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to many people whose contribution has been useful in the completion of this study.

Firstly, I am grateful to the School of Education, University of Stirling for providing me with such an opportunity. I would like to thank all members of staff at the School of Education, without their kindness and collaboration with the research students this work would not have been realised. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Julie Allan and Dr. Alison Fox who started the supervision task and Professor Cate Watson and Dr John I'Anson who completed it, for their help and guidance. My profound thanks go to Professor Cate Watson for her patience, enthusiasm and wisdom, and who challenged my thoughts during our meetings. Her constructive comments and guidance have been indispensable throughout the research process.

I am extremely grateful to my extended family, my parents, brother and sisters, for their continued support and encouragement. With a special mention for my father and mother, their inspiration and encouragement that provided invaluable support to enable me to complete this journey. They worked hard to support me in order to seeing this dream turn into reality.

My appreciation to my husband, and my wonderful daughter Lulwah for their understanding, patience, and support. I am so fortunate to have all of you in my life. I am extremely thankful to my friends Dr. Bader Alqallaf and Dr. Modawy Almedlej who knew exactly when to look disappointed and when to encourage and who have been supportive in one way or the other. Their generous contribution has facilitated the completion of this work.

Finally, I am particularly thankful to the schools, teachers, head teachers and mothers in Kuwait who participated in this research in spite of heavy workloads. Without their voluntary contribution this study would not have been accomplished.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Table of contents	5
List of figures	9
List of tables	9
Chapter One Context, Purpose and Significance of the Study	10
Introduction	10
Researcher's personal values	11
Study aim and research questions	11
The significance of the study	12
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	14
The international context and the Salamanca Statement	15
Kuwaiti context	16
Islamic perspective on disability	16
Provisions and services for disabled people in Kuwait	19
Special educational context in Kuwait	21
Inclusive education in Kuwait	24
Inclusion for "slow learners" in Kuwait	25
Thesis overview	26
Conclusion	28
Chapter Two Literature Review	29
Introduction	29
Models of understanding disability	29
<i>The medical model</i>	29
<i>The social model</i>	31
<i>The capability model</i>	33
Influences of the models of disability on educational practice	37
Reflections on the models of understanding disability	39
Inclusion and integration	40

Development of inclusive education	41
Concept of inclusion	42
Policy	48
Structures and systems of inclusive schools	52
Practice	54
Inclusive education in the Middle East	65
Summary	67
Chapter Three Methodology and Design of the Study	69
Introduction	69
Introducing the research paradigms	69
<i>Paradigm followed in this study</i>	71
Theoretical framework adopted in this study	75
Research methodology	75
Research design	76
The research methods	77
<i>Interview</i>	77
<i>Using semi-structured interview in the current study</i>	79
<i>Documents</i>	80
<i>Concept and main assumptions of discourse analysis</i>	81
<i>Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)</i>	82
<i>How CDA is used in the current study</i>	83
Sampling procedures	85
Data analysis	86
Pilot study	93
Ethical issues	93
<i>Procedures</i>	94
Trustworthiness of the current research	95
<i>Credibility</i>	95
<i>Triangulation</i>	96
<i>Transferability</i>	96
<i>Dependability</i>	97
<i>Confirmability</i>	97

Summary	98
Chapter Four Critical Discourse Analysis of the Policy Document of Inclusive Education in the Context of Kuwait	99
Introduction	99
Inclusion from an international perspective	100
<i>The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)</i>	100
<i>Getting it Right for Every Child (2012)</i>	101
Policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait	102
<i>Articles under the Regulation of law 4 of 1996</i>	104
Social culture in the context of Kuwait	111
Gaps and limitations in the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait	114
Conclusion	120
Chapter Five Findings: Perspectives and Understandings of Disability and Inclusion	121
Introduction	121
Themes	121
Understanding disability	123
<i>Difference and special care</i>	125
<i>Disability in the educational context</i>	126
<i>Social model</i>	127
<i>Social and medical models</i>	128
Understanding Inclusion	129
<i>Inclusion means "mixing"</i>	130
<i>Inclusion means including "slow learners" in special classes inside the mainstream schools and having them participate in some lessons and activities with non-disabled students</i>	130
<i>Inclusion aims to change the view of others and to develop social skills of "slow learner" students</i>	131
<i>'I don't have enough idea about the concept of inclusion'</i>	132
<i>'Inclusion in Kuwait is different'</i>	133
<i>Inclusion means equal rights for all students in the school</i>	134
Teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion	135
<i>Special classes in mainstream schools</i>	135

<i>Special buildings for "slow learner" students</i>	139
<i>Lack of intent in implementing inclusion by the Ministry of Education</i>	140
<i>Inclusion is not applied in practice</i>	141
<i>Support for full inclusion</i>	143
Sub-theme one: barriers to inclusion	144
Sub-theme two: participants' suggestions for the development of Inclusive education in Kuwait	156
Conclusion	159
Chapter Six Discussion	163
Introduction	163
Understanding disability	163
Understanding inclusion	169
<i>Teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion</i>	173
Barriers to inclusion	175
<i>Policy: influence of current policy on the practice of inclusion</i>	175
<i>Absence of planning and organising</i>	179
<i>Curriculum</i>	181
<i>Lack of trained teachers in the field</i>	183
<i>Social isolation and bullying</i>	185
<i>Cultural barriers</i>	186
<i>Religion: principles of Islam and inclusion</i>	188
<i>Collectivist culture</i>	191
Conclusion	196
Chapter Seven Contributions, Implications and Recommendations	199
Introduction	199
Contribution to knowledge	199
Implications	200
Practical recommendations and suggestions	210
Strengths and limitations of the study	212
Direction for future research	214
Final thoughts	214
Reference list	216

Figure 1.1: The classification of disabled students in Kuwait	23
Figure 2.1: Ainscow and Miles' Framework (2009, p.5)	42
Figure 2.2: Rose's model of professional development (2008)	58
Figure 3.1: A visual model of the coding process in qualitative research	89
Figure 4.1: The lack of autonomy of schools	103
Figure 5.1: Themes	122
Figure 5.2: Diagrammatic outline of teachers' and mothers' perspectives about the difficulties of full inclusion of "slow learners"	137
Figure 5.3: The main aspects that show that inclusion is not applied in practice in inclusive schools in Kuwait	142
Figure 5.4: The key perceived barriers to inclusion	145
Table 1.1: Classification of the special education schools in Kuwait	24
Table 3.1: Demographics of the study participants and sites	86
Table 4.1: Comparison of the Kuwaiti policy, GIRFEC, and Islamic principles	116
Table 5.1: The participants' responses about disability	123

Chapter One

Context, Purpose and Significance of the Study

Introduction

By being a signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the State of Kuwait has committed itself to the development of inclusive education for all children. Subsequent to signing, the Kuwaiti government has attempted to move towards educating children with disability in mainstream settings in line with the worldwide movement towards inclusive education. Thus, this study is a timely response to the current developments in the provision of educational services to students with disability in the Kuwaiti context.

Winter (2006) states that the recommendations of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) have pushed the movement towards inclusive education for children with special needs in many countries. Currently, the issue of whether, and how, to include disabled students from mainstream schools is highly controversial, confronting educational policy-makers worldwide. In this regard, Ainscow and Sandill (2010, p.401) state that, "Including all children in education is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries." Florian (2008) states that the global inclusion movement is generally understood as an aspect of human rights and a concept of fairness. The argument for inclusion in mainstream schools therefore involves the fundamental issue of human rights and hence the principle of inclusion reflects a complex educational ideology.

In Kuwait at present only two groups of students with disability are educated in mainstream schools. These are children with Down's Syndrome and students with moderate learning difficulties. All other disabled students are educated in special schools according to their particular diagnosed disability. This study investigates the current policy of inclusive education in Kuwait and examines head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives about the inclusion of children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). However, the term MLD will not be used in this

study, as it is not a term in use in Kuwait, thus in this study, in its place, I will use the term "slow learners" which, though a problematic term, more closely accords with the Arabic [batie al-taallom] to refer to such students. The current definition used in Kuwait considers that "slow learner" students are those who suffer from a lack of mental capacity, with an IQ range of 70-84, that results in difficulties in academic achievement. However, policy requires that IQ levels should not be used as the sole basis for diagnosis; it is necessary to strengthen the diagnosis through evaluating academic achievement and psychological, social and medical aspects (Kuwait Ministry of Education, 1996). (This is set out in more detail later in this chapter).

Researcher's personal values

When I started my Master's degree programme at the University of Exeter, in the field of special education, I expected that the programme would focus on the categorisation of students with disability and their characteristics. However, the whole programme was oriented towards inclusive education for students with disability in mainstream schools. This experience lead me to question myself about the reasons for the lack of interest and awareness in the State of Kuwait regarding inclusive education. This motivated me to explore this topic. In addition, my undergraduate studies of basic education in Kuwait in college, specifically at the department of special education needs, did not cover the field of inclusive education, as the whole programme was focused on the classification, categorisation and the characteristics of students with disability. Thus, I decided to continue my research journey with an ambition to develop my knowledge in the field of inclusive education, as research in this field in the Arabian Gulf countries, and especially in the State of Kuwait, is very rare.

Study aim and research questions

A key aim of this research was to understand the current state of inclusive education offered to "slow learners" in Kuwait. This was driven by a belief that considering the voices of head teachers, teachers and mothers is a vital foundation for developing clearer policies, which in turn can shape practice and in addition gain a deeper understanding of the complexities related to the perspectives of teachers and

parents towards inclusion. In order to address this aim, the following research questions were developed:

1. What is the policy context for inclusive education in Kuwait?
2. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand disability?
3. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand the concept of inclusion?
4. What are Kuwaiti female head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion?

The significance of the study

In most Arabian Gulf countries, including Kuwait, research around inclusion is lacking and there is little or no information about policy and head teachers, teachers' and parents' perspectives and understanding held, regarding disability and inclusion. Therefore, investigating the current policy of inclusion, as well as head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives about inclusion, will help in improving the process of including other disabled students who are still excluded in special schools, in Kuwait.

The movement towards inclusion of children with disability is in its early stages in Kuwait. The focus of this study is to investigate teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards the current process of including "slow learners" in mainstream schools. In the Kuwaiti context, only students with Down's Syndrome and "slow learners" are offered inclusive programmes. Moreover, "slow learners" and Down's Syndrome students are not educated in the same inclusive schools. I therefore chose to focus on perspectives relating to including "slow learners" in two primary mainstream schools.

The report on disability, presented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2011, pp.224-225) indicates that, "Parents are frequently active in creating educational opportunities for their children, and they need to be brought on board to facilitate the process of inclusion". This study therefore highlights the perspectives of parents, specifically the mothers of "slow learners" who are included in mainstream schools, as well as the perspectives of mothers of non-disabled students. Teachers and head teachers perspectives are also explored in this study, as successful implementation of

inclusive education depends to a large extent on the views and attitudes of the teaching staff responsible for delivering it (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Thus, considering the perspectives of such key elements (head teachers, teachers, parents) will play a vital role in the development of inclusive education in Kuwait and, it is hoped, will inform similar processes in other countries in the Middle East and beyond.

Additionally, the insights gained from investigating and critically analysing the current policy document of inclusive education, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research tool, carries the potential of reviewing or reformulating the current policies of inclusive education in Kuwait. This also may help Kuwaiti policymakers to conceptualise and envision future change in a way which is suitable to the Kuwaiti cultural context. This is particularly important as there are no previous Kuwaiti studies which have investigated policymakers' understanding of inclusion and disability. Therefore, the current study aims to make a significant contribution to the field of inclusion.

In this research I have adopted a case study methodology within an epistemological framework of constructivism (Crotty, 2003). Case study "has been tried and found to be a direct and satisfying way of adding to experience and improving understanding" (Stake, 2000, p.25). This case study carries the potential to add insight to the international discourse on inclusion and to consider the complexity of such an approach within the Kuwaiti context. Further, using the constructivist approach in understanding teachers' and mothers' perspectives about inclusion and disability enables an exploration of the many different factors that might affect parents' and teachers' understanding of and perspectives about inclusion such as the socio-cultural context. However, it is worth mentioning here that, this research will not consider variables such as gender, age, etc. that have been identified in previous studies as affecting factors on the perspectives of teachers and parents towards inclusive education. The main aim of the current study is to gain a deep understanding of the complexities related to the perspectives of teachers and parents towards inclusion. Specifically, the current study is based on the premise that Kuwaiti teachers' and parents' understanding of and perspectives towards inclusion is set within a cultural context different from many other contexts, especially the western context. Inclusion in the Kuwaiti context is in its early stages and

implementation is very limited, therefore the current study seeks to highlight these issues. In doing so it may contribute to informing policy and implementation, taking into account that there are no previous qualitative Kuwaiti studies in this field.

This study sets an example for further studies in education, in terms of the potential and worth of using the interpretive-constructivist research framework in educational research in Kuwait. Thus, it can be seen as a significant contribution, since it explores teachers' and parents' perspectives through what they say and do, and not through what researchers and policymakers assume about them. Overall, the particular objective is that the perspectives collected in the current investigation, about the barriers of implementation, inclusion and the participants' perceptions about the changes required, is assumed to be a significant element for improving inclusive practices in the context of Kuwait.

The remainder of this chapter sets out the international and local policy context for inclusion in Kuwait, and considers the religious context for understanding disability.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) signed on November 20, 1989, pledged to protect and promote the rights of every child, the right to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential. Accordingly, the Convention stated that all children have the equal right to education that offers equal opportunities and promotes the development of the child to the fullest extent possible (UNICEF, 2012). Additionally, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), introduced by the UN General Assembly in 2006, offers various incentives to promote the human rights of all children with disabilities through detailed provisions pertaining to the right to education, as listed in Article 24. This article specifies the rights of people with disabilities to inclusive education based on equal opportunities without discrimination. In this regard, it is important to develop inclusive education to support the rights of children with disability to be included in mainstream schools based on equal opportunity, as it is considered an essential element to achieve their wellbeing. Thus, one aim of the current study, in the context of Kuwait, is to investigate the situation of inclusion, as a right for students with disability. This

investigation included the individuals who have the first-hand experience with this issue, these are head teachers, teachers, and mothers.

The international context and the Salamanca Statement

We, the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education representing ninety-two governments and twenty five international organizations, assembled here in Salamanca, Spain, from 7-10 June 1994, hereby reaffirm our commitment to Education for All, recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults with special educational needs within the regular education system, and further hereby endorse the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, that governments and organizations may be guided by the spirit of its provisions and recommendations. (UNESCO, 1994, p.vii)

The concept of inclusive education has been gaining ground since the 1990s (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) requires signatories to provide more effective educational responses for all children, regardless of their characteristics, within the context of general educational provision.

Currently, inclusive education refers to the education of all children, regardless of their disabilities, being educated together. As Thomas (2013, p.473) makes clear, the 'crystallisation' of social and political influences, seen in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, increased awareness of inclusion as a matter of diversity and social justice. Thomas (2013) states that educational factors being about mainstreaming and disability have been less significant in the development of inclusive education than social and political influences. In this regard, Norwich (2013, p.2) states that inclusion can be seen as representing, "a contemporary mix of the values of equal opportunity, social respect and solidarity." However, Barton (2003, p.2) suggests that that, "it is this mix of values that can lead to significant ambiguities in its meaning and use". Similarly, Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.2) state that it is important to recognise that, "the field of inclusive education is riddled with uncertainties, disputes and contradictions." Ainscow et al. (2006a, p.22) recognise tensions regarding the definition of inclusive education, indicating the necessity to keep an open mind about the meaning of inclusion. Ainscow and Cesar (2006, p.236) argue that even though educationalists do not agree on a single inclusive philosophy, they are all working towards "more effective educational responses for all children within the context of general educational provision". The tensions add to the complexities

and ambiguities surrounding the implementation of inclusion for the signatories of the Salamanca Statement.

Kuwaiti context

Kuwait was a British territory from 1899 to 1961 and is now an emirate state, speaking Arabic and having its law based on Islam. Kuwait is a small country in the north of the Arabian Gulf with an area of 17,818 square kilometres and a population of just over three million, but among this number there are only around one million with Kuwaiti nationality, according to the Central Statistical Office in Kuwait (Kuwait Government Online, 2011). The Kuwaiti economy previously relied upon trading via the sea, such as pearl harvesting, production of boats and also trading with other nearby states through sea routes (Gaad, 2011). However, the discovery of natural oil reserves caused a great boom in the economy making it one of the highest earning states per capita worldwide (Zanoyan, 1995). Kuwait, which heavily relied on the oil sector, was soon forced by the growing production of other nations to review its economy. As stated by Thabit (1991) the demand for oil in the global economy effectively controlled the expansion and maturity of the Kuwaiti economic system. Alriba'i (1991) explains this significant progress as a movement from the "culture of the pearl" towards the "culture of the oil". Soon Kuwaitis had access to the achievements, experiences and ways of life of other Arab and western societies, having moved from an underdeveloped society to a welfare community, this resulted in changes to the education system and created a policy desire to join the aspirations of the global West through such symbolic actions as signing the Salamanca Statement.

As an Islamic country it is important to highlight Islamic attitudes and positions towards disabled people as part of the state's cultural aspects.

Islamic perspective on disability

Currently, Islam is one of the most widespread religions worldwide, as well as being one of those growing most rapidly. In states that identify themselves as Islamic, statute is largely based upon religion (Morad et al., 2001; Hasnain et al., 2008) and this effectively represents compliance to the teaching of the Qur'an. The primary source used is the Qur'an itself, which is deemed by followers of Islam to be the immediate teachings of Allah. This Holy Book is believed to have been dictated to a

forty year old Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel, within the district of Makkah (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Furthermore, a secondary source of Sharia Law can be identified as the Sunnah, the behaviour, sayings and proverbs (Hadith), morals, beliefs, instructions and leading example of the Prophet Mohammed.

Islamic sentiments favour "kind treatment" of those who are underprivileged and individuals with disabilities. This is demonstrated through both the Qur'an and the Hadith, which express the idea that disability is a commonplace occurrence within humanity. These sources exemplify the nurturing of such individuals, giving real advice on how an individual might do so (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Aljazoli (2004) indicates that Muslims have since the birth of Islam, which was over fourteen centuries ago, strived to assist individuals in need. A prominent example to show this concerns the third Muslim leader, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, responding to a complaint from the father of a blind son incapable of reaching the mosque by donating a nearby house to him. In Damascus another commendable act was achieved by Walidi bn Abd al Malik, the Umayyad caliph, who opened the original care facility for those suffering from disabilities of mental impairment. Additionally, the same man facilitated the construction of the first hospital which catered for care for those who are mentally impaired and brought about the assignment of a caregiver to each of these individuals (Aljazoli, 2004). Such examples recognise that Islam is for everyone within society, including the individuals with disability, and it guides Muslims in providing comfort and support to the disabled over a long period.

Within the Qur'an there is no direct reference to the specific concept of "disability", instead referring to these individuals as "disadvantaged people" (Bazna & Hatab, 2005). Furthermore, as stated by Al-Aoufi et al. (2012) there is an onus placed on the community by the verses of the Qur'an, which requires them to enhance the circumstances and provide support for such individuals. As shown in the following Hadith, the Sunnah (32, 6258) also encourages concern for others:

The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, feeling, is that of one body; when any limb aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.

A further statement of the Hadith, sourced from the Sunnah (8,109) explains that, "the person is not one of us who is not merciful to our youth nor respectful of our elders".

Islamic ideals, embodied by the Hadith shown above, include partnership, teamwork, benevolence and respect. All of these are sentiments that are necessary for the care of others within the community and respect the basic dignity of all people, whether disabled or not. Great emphasis is placed on the avoidance of undervaluing fellow human beings. As mentioned in the Qur'an, there is a notion of a responsibility placed upon Muslims to provide all with their inherent needs - nourishment, sanctuary and care (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). One of the requirements for Muslims, detailed in the Qur'an, is to donate a part of their own wages to charity (Zakat) bringing about a greater level of fairness within the Islamic world. Zakat is a permanent indication to Muslims that each and every individual, particularly those who are disabled, is entitled to at least a sufficient living and emphasises the underlying importance of help within the community (Miles, 1995). People with disability are still owed the privilege of learning; the capabilities of these individuals should not be ignored. This right is clearly evident in the Qur'an. A verse from the Qur'an (80, 1-3) reveals that even the prophet Mohammed was scolded by God due to his eagerness to pursue those regarded as nobility, as in this search he rejected teaching a blind person:

He [the Prophet] frowned and turned away because there came to him a blind man, But what would make you perceive,[Mohammed], that perhaps he might be purified, or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him.

Upon close investigation of this scenario, distinct lessons arise as indicated by Al-Aoufi et al. (2012, p.211):

- Individuals have a right to be treated equally: everyone is equally important, whether disabled or non-disabled.
- Individuals have a right to be educated regardless of disability.
- Individuals have a right not to be underestimated because of their ability.
- Individuals have a right to be included within society and to have an effective, valuable role within it.

The prophet Mohammed, after having been rebuked by Allah, was certain to embrace the blind man at any time when they met (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Moreover, it is clarified by the Sunnah that people are not to be discriminated against on grounds of their race, appearance or age, each individual differing only on the strength of their belief. This is clear from the Hadith mentioned in Sahih Muslim (32, 6220) indicating that, "Verily Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your faces but He looks into your hearts" This idea is also highlighted in the Qur'an (49, 13), "Indeed the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous".

The policy intention, as evidenced by the signing of the Salamanca Statement, coupled with the particular religious and cultural context, will be further highlighted in Chapter Four (the analysis of policy documents of inclusion). The tenets of Islam underpin Kuwaiti policy towards people with disability in terms of providing them high standards of financial support. This is further explained in the following section.

Provisions and services for disabled people in Kuwait

Article (1) in the *Regulation of law* (2010/8) "*the law of people with disability*" defines disability as (the person who is) suffering from partial or total impairment that leads to a lack of mental, physical, and sensory ability, which may prevent him/her from taking over his/her daily and practical life requirements, as well as preventing him/her from participating equally and effectively with others in society. Kuwait started to recognise the rights of people with disability to an education in 1956. Since then, the Kuwaiti government has passed many laws to protect the rights of people with disability. Through legislation, public service agencies have been able to offer specific provisions and services, such as educational, medical, and financial support. These provisions and support are provided, not only for disabled individuals, but also for their families. For example the Kuwait government (Kuwait Government, 2011) highlights some important provision for disabled people as follows:

- Disabled individuals are able to obtain a marriage loan even when they marry a non-Kuwaiti citizen.
- The social allowance of siblings of the disabled child increases by 100%.

- The Public Authority pays a salary to the person with special needs above 18.
- The General Authority for the Disabled Affairs provides a monthly allowance for the mother and/or wife who cares for a disabled son/daughter or husband.
- The legal caregivers of the disabled with severe or medium disability receive a retirement pension at 100% of the salary if the period of the calculated service equals 20 years for males and 15 years for females.
- Disabled employees or employees caring for a disabled child or spouse work fewer hours per day.
- Disabled employees or employees caring for a disabled child or spouse are given priority in employment.
- A disabled employee is entitled to special leave with full salary that is not deducted from her/his other leave days, including pregnancy. The competent technical committee can grant a disabled employee in public, private, and oil sectors 70-day pregnancy leave with full salary and maternity leave for four months with full salary followed by six months with half salary.
- The competent technical committee can grant an employee who cares for a disabled child or spouse a full salary special leave that is not deducted from his/her other leave days if he/she is accompanying his/her disabled child or spouse to have treatment abroad or inside Kuwait.
- Disabled people are exempt from paying tuition for their education, starting from 4 years old until they finish university.
- Disabled individuals may apply for and obtain a scholarship through the Public Authority for Special Needs if they meet the required conditions.
- The special schools have various medical services available, employing medical experts, such as doctors, nurses, and natural therapists, to take care of children's health and deal with emergencies. At the end of the academic courses, the medical team provides a medical statement for each disabled student with some recommendations for teachers and parents. Moreover, the government sends special cases of disabled people abroad for treatment if a particular treatment is not available in Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti Laws 1965/11 and 1996/49 outline the legislation for individuals with disabilities, which is based on fundamental principles advocated by the United Nations and on humanitarian concepts of Islam as well as its moral/ethical heritage (Bazna, 2003). The Kuwaiti Constitution (Article 40) and the Mandatory Education Law 1965/11 (Article 4) contain these general principles, which include:

- The right to equal access and treatment by others in society, regardless of handicap.
- Special schools under the Compulsory Education Law (1965) are licensed by the Ministry of Education to accommodate children with physical and sensory difficulties or mental retardation.
- Recognition that the disabled are not responsible for their condition and should not be penalized for it. (Al Daihani, 2010, p.136)

Although special education in Kuwait now guarantees the right of disabled people to access education, rehabilitation, training, and employment, the government sector has not moved towards inclusive education for all categories of disability (Gaad, 2011).

Special education context in Kuwait

In 2011, there were 362,000 students in government mainstream schools in Kuwait, with 43,000 in kindergarten, 143,000 at primary level, 107,000 at intermediate level and around 59,000 in high school (Ministry of Education, 2011). New statistics about the numbers of students with special needs are not available, however *in 2002, according to a survey by the Higher Council for the Disabled, there are more than 23,000 people identified as having special education needs in Kuwait* (Al-seed, 2003).

Within the geographical area of the Middle East, Kuwait is deemed to be one of the most advanced in terms of providing outstanding learning facilities to students with special needs. As early as 1956 Kuwait started to concede rights for disabled people in its educational system, however currently the education system in Kuwait still segregates students with disabilities. Learners with similar disabilities are educated and receive provisions in separate special schools managed by the special education department under the Ministry of Education. The system supports exclusion and

categorisation of disabled students depending on their disabling conditions, for example children with autism are schooled together and children with hearing impairment are schooled together (Gaad, 2011; Department of Special Education Needs, 2007). In these special education schools there is also segregation by age group and gender, as in mainstream schools. The exception to gender separation is in kindergarten where both boys and girls are educated together in the same classroom. In addition, there is gender segregation of teaching staff as well, with male adult teachers in charge of boys and female teachers in charge of girls because of Islamic principles (Al-Shammari, 2005).

Disabled students, who have completed a preliminary set of studies have the opportunity to join vocational schools. Such institutions prioritise assisting the pupil to use their abilities gained in previous education and if they are able to exhibit these abilities they will be awarded a diploma upon leaving the vocational institution, as stated by the Kuwait Ministry of Education (2002).

There are three stages used in judging how to introduce pupils into special education schools. Firstly, there is a medical analysis of the pupil's capabilities, confirming whether they actually suffer from a disability. These examinations, by the Ministry of Health, are used to "assess [student] abilities not just their disabilities" (Al-Shammari, 2005, p.14). Secondly, the next stage of examination is psycho-social with a series of tests being given to potential pupils, with a range of professionals making the decision. This group of professionals includes therapists, medics, teachers and social science experts who gather the findings from the first and second stages of testing. Only where these professionals approve the admission of a disabled student to the special school will the testing continue to the third stage. At this point, the pupil will be placed in the specified school and their interaction with other children, conduct towards adults in classes and concentration on work will be monitored. The information obtained from earlier tests will be added to the results and analysed concurrently with teachers and professional teams. Al-Shammari (2005) states that from this combination of analysis, a choice will be concluded as to whether or not this student is a suitable pupil for special education schools. Figure 1.1 shows how students with disability are classified.

Al-Shammari (2005) indicated that students with special education needs (SEN) are classified into nine main categories as presented below:

- *Visual impairment*
- *Hearing impairment*
- *Physical impairment*
- *Mental impairment*
- *Autism*
- *Down's Syndrome*
- *Slow learner*
- *Specific learning difficulties*
- *Gifted and talent*

Figure 1.1: The classification of disabled students in Kuwait

It is worth mentioning here that students with specific learning difficulties, such as students with dyslexia, are located in separate mainstream schools, whereas gifted and talented students are located in specific classes in each mainstream school. Regarding slow learners, these students are included in special classes in mainstream schools. The current definition used in Kuwait considers that "slow learner" students are those who are considered to have a lack of mental capacity possessing and having an IQ range of 70-84, that results in difficulties in academic achievement (Kuwait Ministry of Education, 1996). Details about these special classes will be highlighted in the following sections.

There are more than 15 government special education schools in Kuwait. All these special schools are located in one location (Hawally city) and serve students with disability from all parts of the country. The categories in Figure 1.1 have their own special schools in order to serve students with specific needs. Moreover, each school has been designed to be suitable for each category of student and some of these schools are given a positive name in relation to the type of disability with the aim to avoid labelling. For example, schools for students with visual impairment are called in Arabic (Al-Noor schools) which means in English 'the light', schools for students with hearing impairments are called (Al-Amal schools) which means 'the hope', schools for students with physical impairment are called (Al-Raja schools) which means 'hopefulness schools', and for students with Down's Syndrome the schools

are called (Al-Wafaa schools) which means 'fulfilment schools'. Table 1.1 shows the classification of special education schools in Kuwait.

School name	Type of disability	Age of students
Al-Noor schools	Visual imparment	From 6 to 16 years
Al-Amal schools	Hearing impairment	From 6 to 16 years
Al-Raja schools	Physical impairment	From 6 to 18 years
Al-Tarbia alfekria (<i>Intellectual education schools</i>)	Intellectual impairment -severe slow learners	From 6 to 14 years
Al-Taaheel al mihani (<i>Vocational rehabilitation schools</i>)	Intellectual impairment -severe slow learners	From 14 to 17 years
Educational workshop schools	Intellectual impairment - severe slow learners - hearing impairment	From 17-20 years
Al-Wafaa school	Down's Syndrome	From 6 to 18 years
Autistic behavior schools	Autism	From 6 to 18 years

Table 1.1: Classification of the special education schools in Kuwait (Alamal group, 2016)

It is worth mentioning here that each of these schools have two separate locations, one for boy students and one for girl students, as as prescribed by Kuwaiti law on gender segregation.

Inclusive education in Kuwait

Recently, the Ministry of Education in Kuwait has adopted the concept of "aldamj", which means inclusion. However, the government considers only two categories of students with disabilities, Down's Syndrome and "slow learners", as capable of being included in mainstream school, and excludes other students with disabilities in special schools. It is worth mentioning that for most Arabic and Middle Eastern countries:

The term inclusion is preferred, but used not to reflect "all children regardless of their strength and weakness attending the neighborhood schools with same age peers"; instead it refers to any form of social inclusion, or having the child in special units in mainstream schools. (Gaad, 2011, p.12)

In addition, the Ministry of Education has not as yet provided an official definition of inclusion. Even if they do not have an official definition, there is a particular understanding of inclusion. What the government has adopted, in this regard, reflects the integration ethos where achieving the placement of some students with disability in mainstream settings, rather than the concept of inclusion laid out in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement.

Inclusion for "slow learners" in Kuwait

In 1996, the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*, in relation to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was formed in an attempt to practice inclusion in Kuwait. At that stage mainstream schools incorporated special classes to accommodate "slow learners". This project started in three schools and expanded to include 24 schools by 2008 (Al Daihani, 2010). Eligible students, with an IQ of 70-84 or above 85, if they experience severe academic difficulties, are transferred from mainstream classes to these special classes according to the following procedures:

- The children's parents should sign agreement forms before transfer to a special class.
- After entering the special class, teachers may recommend that the students should be able to return to general classes if social and psychological reports provide evidence of their ability.
- Student should not have severe behavioural or mental disabilities.
- The criteria for enrolling are based on IQ tests and academic achievement.

(Al Daihani, 2010, p.144)

The closest translation from the Arabic of what would in the UK be called "moderate learning difficulties" is "slow learner". The term "slow learner" is not now used by practitioners in UK education but is still to be found in literature in the USA (Mangal, 2007). For example, Carroll (1998) defines "slow learners" as

students whose brains are unable to function to such a high level and therefore are unable to keep up with normal school classes. Furthermore, other US academics and researchers have identified "slow learners" as being attributed with some of the following traits:

- Reduced capability for thought, observation and generalisation.
- Decreased reasoning capacity, understanding and comprehension.
- Lack motivation and interest in study.
- Lack of concentration and short attention.
- Uncomfortable with speaking and self expression ability.
- Low self-esteem.
- Lessened awareness of surrounding events.
- Disorganised and lacking characteristics of a leader. (Mangal, 2007)

In this thesis I use the term "slow learner" throughout as reflecting current policy and practice in Kuwait.

Thesis overview

Chapter Two considers the literature which has informed my thinking around inclusive education. In particular, I consider the literature on understanding disability from the perspectives of different models, as this is one of the fundamental issues that the current study seeks to explore in the socio-cultural context of Kuwait. Also, the concept of inclusion is highlighted and the debate about the concept of inclusion, from different perspectives is discussed, in order to show the complexity of such phenomena. In addition, the development of inclusive education from different aspects such as policy, and the international movement towards inclusion for all students to be educated together in mainstream schools is highlighted in this chapter. Teachers' and parents' perspectives in different contexts and their views, concerns and attitudes towards inclusion are also identified.

In *Chapter Three* I outline the theoretical and methodological framework which underpins this research. Qualitative research methods provide detailed and deep data considering the role of social context and the complexities of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The qualitative methods to investigate head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives and understanding of

disability and inclusion are presented in this chapter. Such perspectives and understandings are considered more appropriate than purely quantitative measurements and as a result help to provide a clear picture about the phenomena under study, and fill the gap within the current literature of inclusion. This is specifically important for Kuwait, where inclusive education is in the early stages of implementation and where research on inclusive education is lacking.

Chapter Four highlights the current policy of inclusive education in Kuwait. In this chapter, critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion is adopted as, "a valuable tool for researching policy and change" (Taylor, 2004, p.446). This could have fundamental implications, in the future, for the direction of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion and the development of practice in the field, by reconsidering the content and the articulation of the policy. This chapter compares the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait with other international policies that promote inclusive education such as the Salamanca Statement framework (UNESCO, 1994) and *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012). This process helped to identify the limitations in the current policy and the way that disability is understood through the articulation of the policy text. This chapter then shows how such analysis has contributed to forming a clear idea about the barriers of inclusion as well as the affect of the policy on the current practice of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Chapter Five and *Chapter Six* form the body of this work, as the data collected by interviews with head teachers, teachers and mothers is analysed, presented and discussed. In these chapters the analysed data identifies the ways that disability and inclusion are understood among the participants, in addition to presenting their voice regarding inclusion. The affects of such understanding and the socio-cultural context in forming the way of practicing inclusion in Kuwait are also considered.

Finally, in *Chapter Seven* I consider the implications and contribution of my findings towards the development of the practice of inclusive education in Kuwait. I also offer some recommendations in relation to developing the current policy and practice of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. I hope however that my

findings offer hope and succour to those head teachers, teachers and mothers who want things to be different and who are looking to re-form their own practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in order to investigate the development of inclusive education in Kuwait it is necessary to take into account both the international context and the local cultural context. This chapter has provided a background to the context of Kuwait and its way of implementing inclusion for "slow learners". It also provides a brief overview of the provision and services that the Kuwaiti government offers for individuals with disability. Also, it highlights the principles of Islam towards individuals with disability as an important aspect of the culture of the region.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review provides a context for the research study. In this thesis I argue that inclusive education is based on a conceptualisation of disability, which differs from that which defines special provision. Thus, in this chapter, it is important to highlight models of disability as fundamental factors informing perspectives and practices of inclusion. Following this I examine inclusion as a process, considering concepts of inclusion, the influence of international policy on local policy, structures and systems, and key issues within practices of inclusion.

Models of disability

Arguably, the way disability is understood affects the provision provided to students with special needs. A dilemma in terms of understanding disability involves the conflict between several views of the causes of the disability. Three models, or ways of thinking about disability, the "medical model", the "social model" and the "capability model" reflect these views. It is essential to understand all these models because such models assist in analysing the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait, as well as underpinning perspectives of teachers and mothers towards inclusion.

The medical model

Norwich (2013, p.22) indicates that:

In the medical model, disabled people are seen as problems. They need to change and adapt to circumstances (if they can), and there is no suggestion that society needs to change.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the medical model provided the main approach to understanding disability (Shakespeare et al., 1999). This model emphasises that the medical condition is the main cause and strong effect of the disability. Within this perspective, disability is construed as the direct consequence

of physical, sensory and/or mental impairment due to damage or disease (Oliver, 1996). Cole (2008, p.176) indicates that:

A medical model framework emerges from models used in medicine in which practitioners think in terms of 'conditions', 'treatment', 'cure' and 'rehabilitation', locating the 'problem' within the individual. A medical model assumes that the disabled adult or child is deficient but, it is hoped, alterable; whereas society is fixed, with limited capacity for, or willingness to, change.

It is worth mentioning here that, by locating the "problem" within the individual, the medical model has been seen to reinforce the practice of segregated education and special education provisions for students with special needs (Skrtic, 1995), as the main emphasis will be placed on within-child factors over educational factors.

Some researchers argue that the medical model has advantages when thinking about disabled people, particularly in responding supportively to difference, meeting the individual's needs and practicing prevention (Kauffman, 2007). Waddell and Aylward (2010, p.9) assert that, "the medical model provides the framework for how most people, including health professionals and policy makers, think about disability". This model also judges success by its effective assistance, including assistance for as long as needed. In this model, the focus is on the treatment rather than adaptation of the environment, and such medical treatment may involve life-long assistance to maintain improved functionings (Kauffman, 2007).

Some disabled people however, consider the medical model of disability oppressive, as it perceives disability as something that should be cured and treats disabled people as victims and patients while using words such as "handicapped" and "wheelchair bound" (Tassoni, 2003). The Disability Rights Movement (DRM) argues that the medical model considers medical conditions as the underlying causes of disability, which is responsible for increasing the repression of disabled people (Smith, cited in Kristiansen et al., 2009). Dewsbury et al. (2004, p.147) suggest that the medical model of disability has been criticised for the way in which it views people with disability as somehow "lacking, unable to play a full role in society". Furthermore, this model has been criticised for the way in which it fails to consider the role of society in which disabled people live as it mainly holds individuals and their medical conditions as being essential factors in their disability (Hodkinson &

Vickerman, 2009). However, Shakespeare and Watson (2001), Bury (2000) and Williams (1999) all agree that critics of the medical model disregard the effects of impairments associated with disability on daily activity restrictions. Therefore, these authors argue, it is essential to consider the effect of the impairment on the daily social lives of disabled people. For example, some sort of support which is provided for children with special needs in inclusive education, such as speech therapy for children with autism, is focused on the deficit of the child - his/her impairment, however it plays an important role in helping him/her in their communication with society. Additionally, it is important to realise the child's needs through their impairment in order to provide him/her with the resources and equipment that would be appropriate for their disability. Proponents of this view argue that disability is both biologically and socially caused and this "gives rise to a conceptualisation of disability that focuses on the interaction between the individual and their social location" (Thomas, 2004, p.575).

The social model

The social model of disability reflects newer perspectives towards people with special needs, and it has been developed mainly by disabled people (Tassoni, 2003). This model of understanding disability makes the case that disability is a public issue rather than a personal problem (Barnes et al., 1999). Finkelstein is closely associated with the development of the social model of disability and indicates that, "It is society that disables us and disabled people are an oppressed social group" (Finkelstein, 2001b cited in Thomas, 2004, p.571). This position is also taken by the sociologist Mike Oliver, who is closely associated with the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) (Thomas, 2004). Norwich (2013, p.25) indicates that:

The UPIAS position made a fundamental distinction between impairment and the social situation of people with impairments, called 'disability'. Where impairment was about a defective part or mechanism of the body, disability was the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by social organisation.

Norwich goes on, "from this position, disability was imposed on top of impairment and so distinct and not interacting or affected by impairments". This suggests that society, rather than impairments themselves, disables people with special needs by

viewing them as imperfect and excluding them from several activities in society and by disabling them through the erection of barriers. As Thomas (2004, p.571) argues:

it is this problematic societal response that constitutes disability, meaning that disabled people's political struggle should be directed toward changing society and winning control over their own lives.

Oliver and Finkelstein, as activists for the disabled, emphasise the need to consider the role of barriers - structural, environmental or attitudinal - rather than individual's impairment in the exclusion of people with special needs (Allan, 2010). In this view, focusing on society's structural barriers and responses more than the impairment of disabled people, could be more realistic because changing society's views towards disabled people might increase the accessibility, participation, services, and expectations of the ability of such people within society. As Oliver (1996, p.43) indicates, "it was society and not people with impairment that should be the target for professional intervention and practice".

In contrast, Shakespeare and Watson (2001) disagree with the idea of isolating the impairment from the disability and that it is society, rather than the impairment itself, that disables people with special needs. They argue that impairment is the direct cause of disability and it is not possible to disregard it. "People are disabled both by social barriers and by their bodies" (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p.17). Terzi (2004, p.141) criticises the social model by identifying three limitations: (1) overemphasis on the social aspects of impairment and disability; (2) overlooking of effects of impairment; (3) rejection of the concept of normality in the sense of average human functioning. Moreover, Terzi (2004) argues that disabled people might find this concept difficult to accept. Crow (1992, cited in Allan, 2010) states that for disabled people, it is difficult to accept any idea that separates impairment from disability because it affects their lives strongly. One of the main criticisms of the social model, which emerged from disability studies, is that it ignores the realities of impairment (Shakespeare, 2006). Although Shakespeare credits the social model as having effective impact on the way of defining disability and pushing policy change, he argues that, "it needed to be developed because of its questionable, dangerous and unacceptable implications" (Shakespeare, 2006 cited in Norwich, 2013, p.26).

The capability model

A different approach to disability has been developed by Sen (e.g., Sen, 1992). Sen proposes capability as a model to understand disability (Reindal, 2010). Toson et al. (2013, p.491) indicate that:

The capability approach is a philosophical theory that is concerned with the dignity of all people. It focuses on what people can actually do and how they seek to live their own life.

This model focuses on a person's capability to function that is on what the individual can do. However, Sen's approach does not consider capability in terms of a physical or mental ability; instead, capability is perceived as a practical opportunity (Mitra, 2006). From the perspective of the capability model "human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored, or to be introduced 'later on'); it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality" (Sen, 1992, p. xi). Sen emphasises the kind or quality of life that people are able to live, reflecting their capability to achieve, accomplish, and succeed in being or doing. Overall, Sen believes in the importance of individuals' interests rather than their actions and behaviours (Mitra, 2006). Sen considers that equality needs to be perceived in terms of the ability of each individual to pursue and achieve well-being. Accordingly, individuals' well-being and their freedom to achieve optimal well-being could be used as measures of equality (Terzi, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that Sen (1992, p.39) differentiates between functionings, defined as:

beings and doings constitutive of a person's beings, such as being adequately nourished, being in a good health, being happy and having self-respect or taking part in the life of community.

And capabilities, defined as "the substantive freedoms a person has, or the 'real alternatives' available to the person herself to achieve well-being" (Sen, 1992, p.40). Thus capabilities represent a person's freedom to achieve valuable functionings. Since functionings are constitutive of a person's being according to Sen, "an evaluation of a person's well-being has to take the form of an assessment of these constitutive elements" (Sen, 1992, p.39).

In contrast to the capability model, the medical and the social models of

understanding disability focus on the *causes* of disability and ignore other influences of such disability on well-being and the individual's quality of life. For instance, Crow (1996) indicates that some disability activists have been criticised for maintaining the social model of disability, which does not recognise the effects of impairment. Conversely, the medical model ignores the interaction between impairment and the environment. In this respect, the capability perspective can provide a more pragmatic framework compared to other models of understanding disability, as it "shifts the focus onto the 'impact' of disability, rather than its causes" (Terzi, 2010, p.99). For instance, Mitra (2006, p.246) states that the capability approach, "brings out the possibility that the economic resources of the person with impairment and his or her economic environment can be disabling". Based on this perspective, Terzi (2014, p.486) argues that one of the significant insights following from Sen's approach is that:

The centrality and comprehensive view of human diversity is particularly important for reconceptualising disability and difficulties in terms of capability limitations, as well as inherently relational, and as one among the many aspects of human diversity.

Further, Terzi (2005) indicates that 'The capability approach goes beyond the dilemma of difference, leading to an understanding of difference as a *specific variable*.' (Terzi, 2005 cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3). The element of human difference is disregarded by other perspectives of justice, whereas the capability approach places it at the core of the 'comparative evaluation of people's well-being' (Terzi, 2014, p.486). Human difference is not only seen from a normality standard as in the medical model, or as just something to celebrate as in a social model of understanding disability, it is however human difference within a capabilities perspective which is considered as 'a specific variable within an objective reality, which can be evaluated in relation to an individual's functions and capabilities' (Terzi, 2005 cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3). In this regard, Sen (2009) claims that human differences within a capability approach are considered as 'encompassing physical, social, cultural and environmental differences, as well as a personal difference in terms of how each individual makes different use of resources' (Sen, 2009 cited in Terzi, 2014, p. 485). Based on this perspective, 'what is important in evaluating the relative position of individuals, their advantages or disadvantages, is

not the amount of goods at their disposal, but what individuals can do with the resources they have' (Terzi, 2014, p.485). Terzi (2008) indicates that Sen's capability approach allows the individual with disability, if their capability is limited, appropriate resources which should be provided in order to gain an equal chance to achieve functionings within an aim to achieve well-being, which is at the heart of the main assumptions of this approach, as a matter of justice. Therefore, the need to acknowledge and identify differences within the capability approach of understanding disability is within an aim to show that there are inequalities and this identification of such differences interrupts the matter of justice. Reindal (2009, p.163) states that:

The revision process of the WHO in 1980 abandoned the term 'handicap' and used 'disability' to cover all three perspectives: bodily, individualist, and social. Disability is thus conceived as the interaction of health characteristics and contextual factors.

Such a revision process of understanding disability is closely related to the capability approach which analyses disability at the capability level and functioning level (Mitra, 2006). It provides an understanding of disability that fits with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the WHO which conceptualises disability as an interaction between the individual and social factors; ICF emphasising that the causes of disability can be both individual and social and that such disability can exist not only because of environmental barriers but also of individual restrictions (Reindal, 2009). According to the WHO (2007, p.255-256):

ICF can assist in identifying where the principal 'problem' of disability lies, whether it is in the environment by way of a barrier or the absence of a facilitator, the limited capacity of the individual himself, or herself, or some combination of factors.

In this regard, the ICF framework is the closest to a definition of disability under the capability approach which considers different aspects, that could be a reason in the creation of a disability, including standard of living, quality of live, restriction of functioning and individual's well-being (Mitra, 2006).

Accordingly, this perspective promotes a conception of disability as an aspect of human diversity and individuals' interactions with their physical, economic, social, and cultural environment without directly referring to diversity as an abnormality,

with an aim to overcome the oppression that is built into the concepts of normality, abnormality, and diversity (Terzi, 2010).

Reindal (2010, p.8) reminds us that inclusion implies participation in something that is valuable, arguing that inclusive education has to address diversity and increase the participation of students with disability in inclusive schools stating that:

Inclusion is not just a structural issue about how we organise or change the different aspects of the school - with reference to personnel, pedagogical methods, material and cultural structures - to fit the diversity of the pupils; it is also an ethical concept because it is for the purpose of something - that is, inclusion is for participating in something that is valuable.

Accordingly, the capability approach links justice and equality with opportunities to achieve well-being, suggesting that capability perspectives contribute to the understanding of disability both ethically and theoretically (Terzi, 2010). The capability approach does not try to determine the biological or social causes of disability, instead it focuses on a full set of capabilities that a person has and the role of impairment on them (Terzi, 2010). This can in turn promote inclusive education practices by increasing the opportunity of students with disability to participate in mainstream schools, as the role of education within the perspectives of this model is the expansion of the capabilities and promoting well-being (Terzi, 2010). Sen's belief is that capability reflects opportunities for functioning to achieve as well as to ensure people's rights to exercise choice within an aim to lead a meaningful life (Wolff, 2007). Clearly, the capability model offers a new and valuable perspective on disability and inclusive education, by considering the capability of individuals with special needs to achieve. Sen's capability approach aims to modify our current understanding, based on which impairment and disability are viewed as unilaterally biologically or socially determined, specifically because disability can be determined by personal and external factors (Terzi, 2010). However, this approach has been criticised for its inability to determine a fixed and complete list of capabilities that would be applicable in all cases and contexts (Terzi, 2010). Sen (2004, p.78) argues against such criticisms, claiming that such a list would deny the importance of "what the citizens come to understand and value through democratic discussion, and would be divorced from the particular reality of any society". Further, Sen (2004, p.78) also states that one cannot avoid ordering such

capabilities, but these cannot be determined a priori, rather they must be derived from the circumstances of each context, for example:

We may have to give priority to the ability to be well nourished when people are dying of hunger in their homes, whereas the freedom to be sheltered may rightly receive more weight when people are in general well fed, but lack shelter.

Influences of the models of disability on educational practice

Corbett and Norwich (2005) suggest that applying the medical model to education is ineffective because it permits professionals to focus solely on what a child cannot do rather than on what he or she can learn. Oliver (1996) argues that by treating the "symptoms" of disability, rather than the needs, concerns and difficulties of the disabled child and their family, medical professionals perpetuate a form of social oppression by "medicalising" the disabled individual and their family.

The medical model of understanding disability can have a negative impact, in the educational context, because it can "refer to explanations of educational difficulties at the individual child level rather than at various social levels" (Norwich, 2013, p.21). From this perspective, success or failure at school is seen as being uninfluenced by complex social, cultural and intellectual interactions, but is rather determined by disability (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). From the point of view of the medical model Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue that disabilities are seen as barriers to participation for individuals with impairments. The participation of disabled people, in various activities, is thereby restricted as a result of society focusing on their impairment, rather than on making their physical and social environment more accessible. As Barners et al. (2002, p.177) indicate, "The well-established standard of 'universal design' or an accessible environment for disabled people were never added to the 'medical model' ". Thus, this model could affect the level of participation by students with disability in mainstream schools if those around them see them as unable to participate due to their disability.

Barton (1997b), indicates that inclusive education has built its basis in the assumptions of the social model of understanding disability. In this regard, he argues, the social model of understanding disability can impact positively on inclusive educational practices and can help overcome the structural, environmental, or attitudinal, rather than individual barriers to inclusive education, which could

facilitate the process of participation and education of all students with disability. This is so as one of the key purposes of the social model is to redress oppression and injustice practices towards disabled individuals (Oliver, 1996; Norwich, 2013). Corbett (1999, p.57) highlights the issue of equal opportunities in inclusive schools, indicating that, "the framework of equality is about a genuine commitment to inclusion". This commitment, Corbett claims, might involve motivating an institution to respond to different ideas, accept change, as well as increase its sensitivity to language, imagery, and the presentation of ideas. In the forefront is the creation of an institutional culture that would acknowledge and respond to diverse needs accepting all people as they are. This understanding of inclusion is in sharp contrast with special provision that the child with special needs receives in special schooling (Florian, 2010). In this sense, Norwich (2013, p.93) argues that the promotion of the social model of disability plays an effective role in critique of special education practices as well as on:

refocused interest on how ordinary schools could be restructured or reformed to accommodate the diversity of learners. From this interest it is clear how the idea of an inclusive school would emerge.

According to this perspective, it could be argue that promoting the views of the social model of understanding disability within the school culture that supports the view of accepting people as they are and making the environment of the school more accessible for all could develop inclusive practices and positively affect teachers attitudes towards students with special needs via responding to all learners' diversity within the school. Thus, teachers who hold the social model of understanding disability might increase the opportunities of the participation of the students with disability in their class room as well as responding better to each students needs and diversity rather than focusing on his or her individual deficits, and that in turn affects positively on their learning and wellbeing at inclusive schools.

In the educational context, the capability approach which conceptualises the understanding of impairment and disability beyond the divide between individual and social factors, that are reflected in both the medical and social models of understanding disability, promotes relational and multidimensional views towards understanding disability by considering the interaction between different factors. Terzi (2010, p.106) indicates that:

In capability terms, disability is seen as a specific aspect of human diversity emerging from the inter-locking of individual with social, environmental and circumstantial factors. It is therefore seen as a disadvantage interrelated both to impairment and to the design of social arrangements.

The capability approach involves reframing the concept of impairment and disability in terms of functionings and capabilities. From this perspective, impairment is a personal feature that is likely to affect certain functionings leading to a disability. Thus, in essence, disability is a restriction of functionings that result from the interaction between personal and social circumstances (Terzi, 2010). Predetermined normality assumptions have no effect of the capability approach; thus, the existing concerns associated with understanding of disability and special educational needs seem to receive responses that are more positive within the perspective of capability approach (Terzi, 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that this model helps teachers in inclusive classes respond better and differently to the needs of children with disability by looking at the complexity of both individual and circumstantial dimensions. As Terzi (2010, p.111) indicates:

The Capability framework looks precisely at the relational aspect of how the individual child interacts with her schooling environment and how she converts resources into functionings while at the same time, considering the design of the environment.

Reflections on the models of understanding disability

In terms of providing a theoretical conceptualisation to underpin inclusive educational practices it can be argued that no single model is adequate on its own. Analysis of the three models reveals certain limitations inherent in each. It seems that the medical model ignores, or at least marginalises, the difficulties that the environmental factors impose on disabled people. On the other hand, the social model disregards the impairment as a cause of disability, while the capability approach "goes beyond the dilemma of difference, leading to an understanding of difference as a specific variable" (Reindal, 2010, p.3). In this sense, according to Terzi (2004, cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3) the:

difference within a capability perspective is neither deviance from a normal standard, as in the medical model, nor is difference just something to celebrate as in postmodern views of the social model, but is a specific variable with an objective reality, which can be evaluated in relation to an individual's functions and capabilities

Hence, in this regard, Reindal (2010, p.156) asserts that:

A proper understanding of disability theories requires the appreciation of both the distinction between individual and social approaches and the distinction between materialist and idealist explanations.

Pfeiffer (2001) points out that many disability researchers agree that no single model can clarify disability entirely. Accordingly, the social model might help to understand the needs of the disabled child by looking at the environmental, structural, and attitudinal barriers that exclude children. On the other hand, the medical model focuses on the impairment and problems of children with special needs, while the capability model considers the dignity of all people and what children can do and achieve rather than what they cannot do (Toson et al., 2013). Reindal (2010, p.10) states that:

The capability approach allows a view of inclusion as an ethical concept in which the purpose is to adapt for the 'equality of what' for each pupil.

Therefore, I argue that instead of adopting the view of a single model, attention must be given to the environmental and individual variables in addition to the capabilities, wellbeing and freedom to choose the way of life which is promoted by the capability perspectives. Considering different conceptualisations of this phenomenon might increase our understanding of disability in practice. As Mitra (2006, p.236) indicates, "each disability model may bring a useful perspective on disability in a given context".

Inclusion and integration

Models of disability have important implications for the development of policy related to meeting special educational needs. Arguably, adherence to the medical model which emphasises diagnosis, categorisation, and individual treatments, based on deficits, gives rise to the logic of segregated education (Barton, 1987), while the concept of inclusion is based on a social model of disability that considers barriers as arising from the student's educational environment. Between full segregation and full inclusion lies integration in which students with disability may be permitted to attend mainstream school if their disability is such that they may adjust to normal schooling. Integration is therefore less likely to be concerned with making additional arrangements for students with disability in schools, which therefore do not need to change overall (Ainscow, 1995). Instead, integration reflects a process of

assimilation; focusing on assimilating and changing individuals with special needs to make them fit in. On the contrary, inclusion involves more radical restructuring of school systems with an aim to embrace all children. Thus, inclusion involves the school in the process of accommodation by requiring the school to change as well as adapt new curricula, methods, resources, and procedures with an aim to becoming more responsive to the needs of students with special needs. However, confusion arises because the terms integration and inclusion are as Thomas et al. (1998) assert, often used interchangeably regardless of the conceptual distinction between them. Moreover, Pijl and Dyson (1998) argue that except in the USA and UK, where inclusion is the preferred term, integration appears to be preferred internationally. Despite the differences between integration and inclusion in Anglophone literature, integration and inclusion are translated by one Arabic word "Damg" which indicates educating all children together. In this thesis, I translate Damg as inclusion, but it is arguable that the lack of a conceptual distinction between inclusion and integration has implications for the development of educational practices to meet the needs of students with special needs in Kuwait.

Development of inclusive education

Ainscow and Miles (2009) developed a framework based on what international research suggests are features of education systems that are successful in moving in an inclusive direction. This framework was prepared for the UNESCO International Conference on Education, *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*, held in Geneva in November 2008. Ainscow and Miles (2009) claim that it is important first to use evidence to address barriers to education that some learners experience. They stated that this requires collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative research data in addition to gathering the opinions of students and their parents. Various types of data could provide evidence that stakeholders could use not only to modify moving policy and practice, but also to gather the information on the stages of development of education systems in various regions. Ainscow and Miles (2009) suggest that the framework should be seen in terms of ideals (i.e., aspirations against which existing arrangements can be compared) to pinpoint areas for development. Such a framework involves four overlapping themes, identified in Figure 2.1.

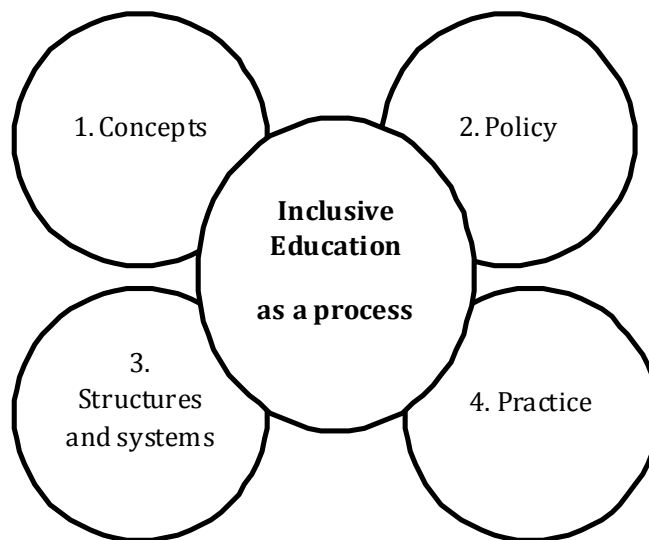


Figure 2.1: Ainscow and Miles' Framework (2009, p.5)

The structure of the following sections are based on the themes of Ainscow and Miles' Framework, as these themes are considered as fundamental elements for the development of inclusive education.

Concept of inclusion

Over the past few decades, in many parts of the world, the concept of educating disabled children has progressed from segregation to the ideology of inclusion via the process of integration (UNESCO, 2005; Dockrell & Lindsay, 2000). For example, The 1944 Education Act in the UK introduced 10 "categories of handicap" each with separate educational provision, which prevailed until the influential Warnock Report (DES, 1978) that recommended integration of pupils into mainstream schools (Armstrong, 2007). Such integration was described as being either "locational" or "functional", with only functional integration meaning "joint participation in educational activities" (DES, 1978, 7.9). How then, Norwich (2013) asks, did the term inclusion replace the term integration? Norwich (2013) answers this question by clarifying two main reasons. First, both terms are closely related to each other, the term integration refers to various aspects including locational integration, curricular integration and social integration, as elucidated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). However, there had been a focus on the locational integration aspect, while the social and the functional aspects of integration, which are highly related to the term inclusion, had tended to be overlooked (Norwich,

2013). Such a limited understanding of the concept of integration, to emphasise merely locational integration, may result in the misleading conclusion that integration means to place children under one roof without making any changes in the organisation (Norwich, 2013). However, the term inclusion involves organisational change. This understanding may also lead the supporters of the social model, who believe in social change, to adopt the term inclusion instead of integration, as integration is seen to be close to the medical model, which focuses on changing the individual (Norwich, 2013). In this regard, Norwich (2014, p.497) indicates that inclusive education denies the challenges and difficulties associated with disability, stating:

The move away from learner characteristics in definitions of inclusive education is partly about avoiding the definition of differences in terms of challenge or 'difficulties', what is often presented as the rejection of the 'deficit' model.

The concept of inclusive education has gained significant interest since the 1990s (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca World Conference, which attained agreement by 92 countries and 25 international organisations, established one of the most significant documents that embraces the principle of education for all, by encouraging schools to be inclusive (Miles & Singal, 2008).

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions; this should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantages or marginalized areas and groups. (UNESCO, 1994, p.6)

Despite the clarity of this statement the meaning of the term inclusion is still confused. When the Salamanca World Conference called for inclusive education, the participating countries signed an agreement despite different understandings of the concept of inclusion (Miles & Singal, 2008). As Peters (2007, p.117) notes:

Inclusive education may also be implemented at different levels, embrace different goals, be based on different motives, reflect different classifications of special education needs, and provide service in different contexts.

Subsequently, different ways of implementing inclusion of children with special needs, in practice, have been developed, such as, "radical integration (Italy),

gradualist approaches (Denmark, Sweden) or continuing segregation education with only limited access to the mainstream" (Bayliss, 1996, p.14). In addition, some countries understood the Salamanca Statement as a call to close all special schools and prevent any kind of segregated education; other countries viewed it as a call to increase the number of disabled pupils who access mainstream education (D'Alessio & Watkins, 2009). Many essential factors, for example cultural standards, traditions, or trends of the public regarding disabled people, might affect the implementation of inclusive education for disabled children. Mitchell (2005) states that such diverse perspectives towards inclusive education, among countries, occur because of cultural principles and thinking, economic standards, and history. It is clear that the different understandings of inclusion will affect the implementation and application of inclusion of children with disabilities.

Within the field of education, the principle of inclusion is complex, therefore a commonly agreed upon definition does not exist (Pearson, 2005). Various definitions addressing similar key issues have been proposed. For example, many researchers (Ainscow, 2007; Farrell, 2004; Thomas, 1997) regard inclusion as considering a disabled child as a valued member of the school community. Farrell (2004, p.7) states that inclusion is:

The extent to which a school or community welcomes pupils as full members of the group and values them for the contribution they make. This implies that for inclusion to be seen to be "effective" all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community, that is, they should be fully included.

Other researchers (e.g., Frederickson & Cline, 2009; Smith & Green, 2004) focus on developing an inclusive curriculum through organisational arrangement, support, and school improvement. For instance, Frederickson and Cline (2009, p.66) point out that:

Inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organization and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity.

In addition, Sebba (1996 cited in Florian et al., 1998) indicates that inclusion reflects the process through which a school reconsiders and advocates for its curricula and

provision, in order to respond to all pupils as individuals. Another perspective suggests that inclusion is the process of not only educating children with special needs but also removing the barriers to achievement, increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from mainstream settings (e.g., Ainscow, 2005; Barton, 1997a; Booth, 1996). For example, according to Ainscow (2005), a broader term for inclusion refers to a process that involves identification and removal of barriers and supports the presence, participation, and achievement of all students, particularly those at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement. Although definitions of inclusion vary, some researchers have provided rather illustrative ones, for example Ballard's (1997, pp.244-245) definition is more comprehensive, as it addresses most key issues included in the above mentioned definitions:

Inclusive education means education that is non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture, gender, or other aspects of students or staff that are assigned significance by a society. It involves all students in a community, with no exceptions and irrespective of their intellectual, physical, sensory, or other differences, having equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum of their society as full time valued members of age appropriate mainstream classrooms. Inclusion emphasises diversity over assimilation, striving to avoid the colonization of minority experiences by dominant modes of thought and action.

It is clear that inclusion remains a disputed concept that is open to interpretation, which inevitably impacts on the practice of inclusion and the quality of support that teachers and parents offer because there is no specific reference that teachers can follow regarding the meaning of inclusion. Allan (2012, p.1) points out that, "there is much uncertainty among researchers and teachers about what it means to include". In this regard, Ainscow et al. (2006, p.23) argue that:

Without a clear view of what we mean by inclusion we had no way of knowing how to support it, or of forming a judgement about when the actions of ourselves or others increased or decreased it.

The confusion regarding the concept of inclusion leads to differing views about whether children with special needs should be fully included, partially included, or remain excluded. Indeed, Smith (2006 cited in Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009) observes that the international debate on inclusion has focused on whether disabled children should receive their education in special or mainstream schools, rather than addressing the quality of education and support that they receive. Thus, Knight

(1999) asserts that simply placing students with disabilities in classrooms with other students, does not guarantee inclusion. Similarly, Mitchell (2005) argues that not all disabled students are able to access educational provision in terms of their level of disability and therefore fully inclusive education cannot be effective or even possible. Evans and Lunt's study (2002 cited in Smith & Thomas, 2006, p.72) concludes that:

The inclusion of all pupils with SEN and disabilities was idealistic and unrealistic and, more specifically, was particularly difficult for some pupils who have severe difficulties that are not easily accommodated in mainstream schools.

Accordingly, many researchers indicate that if inclusion is not suitable for all categories of children with special needs, then what is important to consider are their rights to a good learning environment. For example, Warnock (2005, p.14) disagrees with the idea that inclusive education means "having all the children under the same roof" in favour of "including all children in the common educational enterprise of learning wherever they learn best". Warnock believes that the feeling of *belonging* is a fundamental aspect of her concept of inclusion. The question of rights is therefore of fundamental importance. However, Norwich (2002, p.70) claims that, "rights are defended without recognition of the need to balance some rights against others". These rights include the right to participate in ordinary school, the right to acceptance and respect, the right to individually tailored learning, the right to participate in common learning opportunities, the right to active contribution and choice in the matter (Lunt & Norwich, 1999). Clearly, many researchers identify that mainstream schools may not be appropriate for all children with special needs without exception, and that inclusive education is a conditional right and exercising such a right should be limited by circumstance. Sinclair (1998 cited in Cigman, 2007) demonstrates that in certain circumstances inclusion may not always be the best option for all children with various kinds of disability. Not only their rights must be considered, but also the extent to which these rights are met effectively in practice (Lindsay, 2003). In this sense, some researchers such as Armstrong et al. (2011) argue that practically inclusion is seen as not engaging with the realities of education.

It could be argued, that Warnock's position against understanding the concept of inclusion as "having all the children under the same roof" is logical because mainstream schools may fail to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all categories of children with special needs. In this regard, to reach targets for the education of disabled children through inclusion account must be taken of their needs. For example, Reid (2005) suggests that successful inclusion must take account of the needs and differences of all children. In addition, the right of disabled children to receive good quality learning should be considered. In this sense, Hornby (1999, p.153) offers a proposal to advocate for responsible inclusion, recommending, "a continuum of provision to meet a continuum of needs." He asks, "Is it more important for a child to be educated in the local school, or to be educated well?". Thus, it could be claimed that effective inclusion considers the ability of the child with special needs and encourages "a sense of belonging" and "receiving good learning".

Some researchers however, have offered opposing arguments saying that inclusive education should include *all* children without exception. Barton (1997a) indicates that preventing even some groups from gaining access to mainstream provision could also be understood as a form of exclusion. This perspective is based on a vision that excluding any categories of disabled children, from participating in mainstream school with other developing children, is considered exclusion and it does not reflect the aim of inclusive education, which is a part of human rights. As Barton (1997a, pp.233-234) argues:

Inclusive education is about responding to diversity, listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members, and celebrating differences in dignified ways, accordingly, the goal is to include rather than exclude, since inclusion experience is about learning to live with one another not about placing disabled student in classrooms with their non-disabled peers; it is not about throwing students into an unchanged system of provision and practice, instead, it is about how, where, why, and with what consequences we educate all pupils.

In the UK, the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) has promoted this view pointing to evidence of the damage caused by segregation:

- *The existence of segregated special schools stifles creativity of mainstream schools about how to respond to diversity and weakens their responsibilities to include all learners. It undermines efforts to develop inclusive education*

by draining resources from mainstream, which in turn sets back the development of inclusive communities.

- *Segregated schooling perpetuates discrimination, devaluation, stigmatisation, stereotyping, prejudice, and isolation - the very conditions which disabled adults identify as among the biggest barriers to respect, participation and a full life. (CSIE, 2003 cited in Thomas & Vaughan, 2004, p.111)*

Further, Miles and Singal (2008) state that education is a much broader concept than merely the acquisition of skills; it should encourage participation of children in teaching and learning. The concept of inclusive education is designed to promote democratic principles, values and beliefs that underpin equality and social justice. However, regarding the dilemmas and the debate around the issue of participation in mainstream school, Norwich (2013, p.106) indicates that academic and social participation is questionable, by posing the question:

Are part-time placements in off-site settings for appropriate and time-limited learning compatible with inclusive education, if the children are still members of ordinary schools and classes?

Norwich (2013) further states that the CSIE proposed and accepted that some SEN children can spend part of their time outside the mainstream classroom. This specific CSIE position could be seen as a step towards justifying some separate groupings and settings, and shows an interconnection between included and separate settings and provision (Norwich, 2013). In this regard, it is clear that the debate around inclusion and its unspecific definition creates contradictions in the practices of inclusive schools, as the concept of inclusion is still elusive (Armstrong et al., 2010).

Policy

Šiška and Habib (2013, p.393) indicate that:

For many years, people have been labelled as being 'normal', 'disabled' and 'handicapped' around the world. The theoretical developments around understanding disability have influenced professional knowledge and policy-making. During the twentieth century, social sciences show that disability is a socially created phenomenon rather than the individual's fault.

It is worth mentioning here that the development of inclusive education resulted from reactions against the inequality, ideology and discrimination of the 1960s and 1970s which were founded on gender, race and sexuality. In this regard, the

development was not principally about targeting children with special educational needs (Armstrong, 2007). Two fundamental views developed globally; the need for people to accept and acknowledge difference and the development of politics, these views lead to the consideration of the term "social inclusion" to be the opposite of "social exclusion" (Norwich, 2013). The important factor of the political aspect is to challenge the social and educational context, so as to encourage inclusion and "eliminate oppressive hierarchies, which solely define disabled people as requiring need and care" (Terzi, 2010). Thus, this perspective reflects a political standpoint that opposes exclusionary policies and practices.

Today, global policy efforts, such as UNESCO, support the development of inclusive societies. Nind (2014, p.528) indicates that, "Inclusive research and inclusive education share an ideological basis as political concepts based on moral or ethical superiority." Children with disabilities are now being included in regular classrooms, and this worldwide trend has gained popularity in the last three decades. Oliver (1996, p.87) states that, "Inclusive education is about a change in the ethos informing educational policies and therefore, the school's culture". Accordingly, Sharma et al. (2012b) indicate that in many developed countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia) legislation or policies have evolved to support an inclusive model of teaching students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. Similarly, several developing countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain) have introduced policies to propose the broader principles of inclusive education (Gaad, 2011).

In this sense, Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.5) consider policy as a key aspect in the process of inclusion, indicating that:

In an education system that is becoming inclusive:

2.1 The promotion of inclusive education is strongly featured in important policy documents.

2.2 Senior staff provide clear leadership on inclusive education.

2.3 Leaders at all levels articulate consistent policy aspirations for the development of inclusive practices in schools.

2.4 Leaders at all levels challenge non-inclusive practices in schools.

According to this view "policy has to be given meaning by school communities, and because it embodies particular understanding of the education task" (Ainscow et al., 2006a, p.171). Leadership in mainstream schools can play a fundamental role in

leading the process of implementing the policy. In this regard, Ainscow et al. (2006a, pp.170-171) argue that the development of inclusive practices, promoted by policy, is essentially based on the development of an inclusive culture in the school context. For instance:

Particular leadership styles, an open attitude towards enquiry, a supportive and collaborative set of an open attitudes towards enquiry, a supportive and collaborative set of relations ships among staff.

These key aspects could effectively promote the practice of inclusion, with head teachers being able to lead staff, students and parents of the school to believe and engage with an explicit set of inclusion principles, encouraged by policy (Ainscow et al., 2006a).

Ainscow et al. (2006a, p.21) indicate that, "The issue of inclusion is increasingly evident within international debates" and the impact of policy on practice cannot be underestimated. However, the role of policy in supporting the development of practice and the influence of transnational policy on local contexts gives rise to contradictions and ambiguities as global policy comes up against national circumstances (Watson & Michael, 2015). The differences within the cultural context and perspectives towards disability and inclusion of individuals with special needs could be considered as one of the key barriers in the development of inclusive schooling as envisaged in the Salamanca Statement. In this regard, Watson and Michael (2015, p.2) indicate that:

Global policy is, however, a fairly abstract concept and always undergoes what Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.6) refer to as 'translation' a process which, they say, is 'fundamental to understanding how policies play a role in producing and shaping change' as a collaborative performance in which transnational regulation comes up against domestic circumstance. In this way, policy is set out in a series of moves or removes, more or less messy and contested, at international, national and local levels where its enactment, broadly speaking, is intended to bring about some kind of 'desired or imagined future'. (Rizvi & Lingard 2010, p.6)

Therefore, the current study, and other studies worldwide seeks to investigate how multiple global discourses and policy are shaping the actual development of inclusive education, (e.g., Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Liasidou, 2008; Selvaraj, 2015; Thomas & Johnstone, 2015; Zalizan et al., 2014; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006).

For example, Alur's (1998) research focuses on policymakers and the community in India with the aim to examine socio-cultural attitudes towards disability. Alur's research examines the significance of embedded cultural and ideological influences on policy and people, indicating that culture and ideologies have persistent effects on marginalisation of children with disabilities. In addition, Liasidou's (2008) critical analysis of the policy of inclusive education in Cyprus, using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach as a research tool, focuses on the ways through which power expresses itself through language. The findings reveal that such policy in Cyprus is contradictory and fragmented, as the law and regulations do not hold the mainstream schools responsible for ensuring equal treatment of all children as valued members of the school community. Thomas & Johnstone (2015) emphasise that inclusive education should be perceived through the interaction of global policies or global discourses with local cultural perceptions of inclusion. They investigated the ways in which multiple global discourses (e.g., the Salamanca Statement regarding inclusive education and the US-inspired accountability-focused inclusive education) affect the development of inclusive education in Denmark, utilising various global discourses on inclusive education and cultural fit. Thomas & Johnstone's study (2015, p.484) proposes a new way of examining policy influence in inclusive education, arguing that:

Because inclusive education is a global phenomenon and because policy transference is not drawn from one source alone, we contend that inclusive education scholars can create deeper and more nuanced understandings of inclusive policies if they:

- (1) Analyse external policies that may be influencing internal dialogue;*
- (2) Analyse the rights, political, efficacy and pragmatic discourses of both external and internal policies; and*
- (3) Analyse internal cultural for explanatory aspects of the interaction between external influence and internal policy narrative.*

In the context of Kuwait, my study uses CDA to analyse internal policy. In addition, the limitation of the internal policy of inclusive education in Kuwait and the problem of cultural fit will be identified, by comparing it with other external policy documents that promote inclusion, specifically the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012). Such a process will build on the existing literature on inclusive education, as I found shortcomings in the way that policy transfer was analysed in comparative education literature, particularly inclusive education policy in the Middle East. Thus, this study seeks to build on the

existing literature of inclusive education and to provide scholars and practitioners insights on future directions.

Structures and systems of inclusive schools

In recent years research has shifted towards identifying the characteristics of effective inclusion as schools have become responsible for ensuring that all students have access to equal educational opportunities, regardless of their backgrounds and conditions (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Peters et al., 2005; Slee, 2001; UNESCO, 1994).

Within the aim to achieve effective inclusion, increasing the participation of students with special needs in mainstream schools and overcoming the deficit view of disability and diversity in the inclusive school, some researchers (e.g., Allan, 2005; Liasidou, 2007; Slee, 2007) argue for change in perspectives towards special needs and inclusion. For instance, Slee (2007) calls for changing epistemological perceptions of children with disability; to move away from focusing on individual defective pathologies and to addressing more pervasive and complex pathologies of schools, through abandoning faulty views of "difference" that define some students as "lacking something" (Trent et al., 1998). In this sense, inclusion is seen as "a process of putting values into action; it results in the educational practices and provisions, systems and structures which embody those values" (Ainscow et al., 2006a, p. 27). Accordingly, the values of day-to-day schooling practice are important for effective inclusion. In this sense, school leaders can play an essential role in enhancing inclusive values and practices in school communities, as indicated by Riehl (2000 cited in Ainscow et al., 2006a, p.183):

School leaders need to attend to three broad types of task: fostering new meanings about diversity; promoting inclusive practices within schools; and building connections between schools and communities.

Similarly, Ainscow (1994) discusses "organisational conditions" - distributed leadership, involvement of high levels of staff, joint planning and a commitment to enquiry among others; that is, the factors that facilitate collaboration and problem solving among staff, which therefore produce more inclusive responses to diversity. Ainscow (1994, p.26) argues that such conditions:

Create a culture within mainstream schools that will enable them to be more flexible in responding to all children in the community. Such a culture would

encourage teachers to see pupils experiencing difficulties not as a problem, but as a source of understanding as to how their practice could be developed.

In this regard, international literature on the effectiveness of school actions in promoting inclusion, as reviewed by Dyson et al. (2002), suggests that effective schools have an "inclusive culture". Teachers and administrators in these schools generally agree on, and respect, differences and commitment to inclusion by facilitating access to learning for all students. Schools with inclusive cultures are more likely to have leaders who are committed to inclusive values and encourage other individuals to hold leadership positions. Such schools are also likely to maintain good relationships with parents and their communities. Accordingly, Ainscow et al. (2006a) argue that inclusive schools should promote inclusive cultures and inclusive values within school communities. Head teachers and other school leaders should be selected and trained based on their commitment to inclusive values and ability to teach and communicate in a participatory manner.

Another key aspect of effective inclusion is social participation, which is considered as one of the key aspects of inclusive schools and is clearly defined in the *Index for Inclusion*, in terms of "The participation in the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools" (Booth et al., 2000, p.3). In Kuwait, the government emphasises only physical inclusion, in other words moving children with special needs from special schools to mainstream schools. However, it is important to keep in mind that inclusion embodies a range of assumptions about the meaning and the purpose of schools, it is not only about "going" to the mainstream school, instead it is about "participating" in the mainstream school (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). The student's experiences of learning and quality of life in the school, rather than placement in the mainstream school, are important considerations. O'Brien (2001, p.48) indicates that, "inclusive schools must offer more than inclusive placement 'being there' and focus upon the provision of inclusive learning 'learning there' ". As such, inclusion does not refer simply to educating and engaging disabled children effectively; it also addresses the challenges that emerge when developing inclusive schools for all learners.

Availability of resources, which benefit learners with disability in mainstream school, is one of the main aspects of structuring schools to becoming inclusive

(Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Facilities, equipment, and the availability of resources at the school could also contribute to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) suggest a connection between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the existence of school factors such as teaching aids, computers, assistance for teachers including the provision of speech therapists, and the support of head teachers. Furthermore, evidence from the literature suggests that teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards inclusion when they have access to adequate and appropriate resources and materials, when they are able to provide physical environments conducive to students with physical disabilities, and when the class size is smaller (Clough & Lindsay, 1991; LeRoy & Simpson, 1996; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Mushoriwa, 2001). For example, Mushoriwa (2001) identified that the majority of primary teachers in mainstream schools in Harare, Zimbabwe have negative attitudes towards inclusion of blind children in mainstream classes, and that both male and female teachers rejected the idea of inclusion. Mushoriwa's (2001, p.142) study showed that, "it is difficult to promote inclusive practices in situations where mainstream classes are large and resources including aids, equipment and support staff are rare".

Practice

This section address several aspects which are considered as fundamental issues in developing inclusion practices such as: preparation, training and knowledge of teachers about inclusion and special needs; teachers self-efficacy; as well as head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusive education. These aspects have significant influence on the inclusion practices and the participation of students with disability in mainstream schools. Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.6) indicate that, "In an education system that is becoming inclusive: schools have strategies for encouraging the presence, participation and achievement of all learners from their local communities". Inclusion takes into consideration that all students are different in a number of ways (not only disability); therefore, schools have to modify their practices to meet the learning needs of various students (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). In this sense, Sharma et al. (2012b, p.12) claim that:

Under an inclusive philosophy, schools exist to meet the needs of all students; therefore, if a student is experiencing difficulties, the problem is with the schooling practices not with the student.

Teachers' preparation for dealing with student diversity, in inclusive schools, is one of the main aspects of becoming inclusive (Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Within an aim to enable teachers to deal with learners' diversity in mainstream schools, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994, p.x) argues for governments to consider developing teachers' knowledge to:

Ensure that, in the context of a systemic change, teacher education programmes, both pre - service and in-service, address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools.

In this regard, teachers' knowledge is considered as an important factor in the development of inclusive education. Teachers' knowledge and training in the field of inclusion and special needs and its affect on teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion is reported in other studies (e.g., Romi & Leyser, 2006; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Gaad & Khan, 2007; Sharma et al., 2009). For instance, the results of a study by Gaad and Khan (2007), conducted in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates among primary mainstream teachers, explored their attitudes towards teaching disabled children and their ability to work in inclusive learning environments as well as to adapt to the inclusion requirement. The study found that primary mainstream teachers felt that teaching in inclusive classes presented difficulties in meeting all students' needs. Without appropriate resources and training, for example knowledge about the Individual Education Plan (IEP), characteristics of disabled students, differentiation and strategies of behaviour management, the majority of the teachers interviewed rejected the idea of including children with special needs. In addition, the teachers presented negative perspectives towards educating children with hearing disabilities, communication disorders, intellectual disabilities, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. An Australian study by Subban and Sharma (2006) identified that, in general, teachers held positive attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream schools, however teachers who had undertaken training courses in special education were found to have more positive attitudes and fewer concerns about the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) note that teachers with university preparation have a more positive attitude towards inclusion and greater self-esteem when covering the educational needs of children with special needs.

Time appears to be one of the challenges to the implementation of inclusion. This includes the lack of time to consult with specialists, apply effective lesson plans, and teach disabled students in regular classrooms (Santoli et al., 2008). Obviously, the barriers associated with managing time relate to a lack of preparation, which causes difficulties for non-trained teachers when it comes to coping with inclusive settings. Therefore, lack of preparation might have a negative effect on their attitudes towards inclusion. According to a survey of the attitudes of Greek teachers towards inclusion, conducted by Avramidis & Kalyva (2007, p.385):

Teachers with further training in special education needs and inclusion matters hold significantly more positive attitudes than those with little or no training concerning inclusion.

Thus, implementing inclusive education is not an easy task as it requires improvement in a teacher's knowledge in order to facilitate their role in the inclusive classroom (Sharma et al., 2012a). However, the issue remains that teacher education has only recently started to address inclusion in general teacher training programmes in some countries, despite a rapidly growing interest in inclusion and policies that are being implemented widely in school districts worldwide (Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014). Some western-style countries (e.g., Australia - specifically New South Wales and Queensland) have made it a mandatory requirement for all teachers to complete a subject course in special or inclusive education (Subban & Sharma, 2006). It could be argued that without this change in teacher educational training programmes, teachers may not be able meet the diverse needs of students in mainstream classes and such issues could affect their attitudes towards inclusive education. In this regard, teacher efficacy has also been found to positively influence attitudes towards teaching in inclusive classrooms. In a study that examined teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, Soodak et al. (1998) found teaching efficacy strongly predicted teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Furthermore, teachers who scored low on efficacy were more likely to report anxiety and to reject the inclusion of students with special needs in their classrooms. Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) reported a positive association among teachers' self-efficacy, their success in the classroom, and the achievement levels of students. Additional research has shown that teachers who score high on self-efficacy are more likely to have positive attitudes towards inclusion (Malinen et al., 2012).

Thus, effective training programmes and positive experiences of inclusion could increase positive attitudes and self-efficacy. Swain et al. (2012) examined the change in pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusive practices, following an introductory special education course. The results suggest that a special education course, paired with field experience working with students with disabilities, can significantly impact on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Oliver (1995, cited in Thomas & Vaughan, 2004, p.113) states that, "Central to moving from integration to inclusion is a deconstruction of school and teacher responses to special children". In this regard, it has been found that the nature and severity of a disability influences the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion (e.g., Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010; Arab & Lyte, 2005; Morley et al., 2005; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Croll & Moses, 2000; Forlin, 1995). Broadly, most of these studies suggest that teachers are more willing to accept or support the inclusion of children with physical and sensory impairments, than those with intellectual disabilities and behavioural-emotional difficulties. Also, most teachers advocate the inclusion of children with mild/moderate disabilities rather than children with severe disabilities. For example, Alghazo (2002), in exploring Jordanian teachers' and administrators' perspectives towards inclusion, found that teachers and administrators had different perspectives on inclusion, depending on the type of disability. They supported the inclusion of students with specific learning disabilities, but had some reservations about the inclusion of students with mental retardation. Such perspectives towards inclusion, that focus on the ability of an individual with a disability as a condition to be in mainstream school, could influence the level of participation of such students in mainstream schools. It could also present limitations for students with disability who are less capable of being included.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have a significant relationship with actual classroom practice. Forlin et al. (2009) examined the relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion with variables such as contact with people with disabilities, and confidence level. The researchers found that confidence in teaching in inclusive classrooms was the single best predictor of participants' attitudes. Thus, in order to successfully teach in inclusive classrooms, teachers need

to have skills in designing classrooms where the needs of all students can be met (Nougaret et al., 2005). In this regard, Rose (2008 cited in Florian, 2008, p.205) suggests that there is a relationship between three elements, as shown in Figure 2.2.

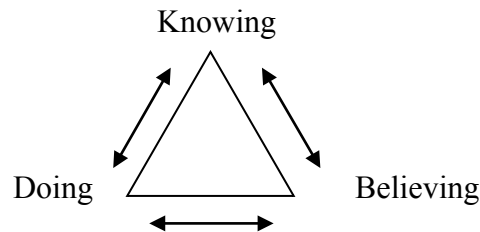


Figure 2.2: Rose's model of professional development (2008)

In this model, any two of the three elements of knowing, believing and doing are thought to influence the third, this means, some teachers may know about inclusive practice but still be unsure about whether they believe in it, but by working in a school that has an inclusive ethos "doing", they come to see that the practice can be effective, These examples show that one does not have to wait for all the elements to be in place.

It has been argued that the "hallmark of inclusive education" is teachers' positive attitudes, beliefs and willingness to accept students with special needs (Forlin et al., 2008; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Hassanein, 2010). Based on such arguments, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have been studied in many parts of the world, commencing as early as the 1950s (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). As would be expected, such studies provide a mixed picture dependent on issues such as policy and culture. Moreover, such studies provide a snapshot of a particular era. Several researchers report that regular teachers do not hold supportive attitudes towards inclusion (Kalyva et al., 2007; Vaughn et al., 1996), while others report more favourable attitudes (Avramidis et al., 2000; Dupoux et al., 2005; Hassanein, 2010; Subban & Sharma, 2006) and a few report neutral or uncertain attitudes (Bennett et al., 1997; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Padeliadu & Lampropoulou, 1997; Yuen & Westwood, 2001; Galović et al., 2014).

Head teachers perspectives towards inclusion have been identified in previous research. Several studies, such as those of Khochen and Radford (2012), Abbott (2006), Wehbi (2006) and Croll and Moses (2000) have focused on head teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. For instance, Abbott's (2006) qualitative study, in Northern Ireland, towards the development of inclusion found that most head

teachers appeared satisfied that their staff worked collaboratively in promoting inclusion. They understood the concept of inclusion in terms of treating all students equally regardless of their disability. They also indicated that all staff in the school were "very conscious of not making a child feel *excluded*" (Abbott, 2006, p.635). In addition, they felt that they could offer an effective education to all children in their schools, however, they also noted that there are multiple barriers to inclusion in their schools that need to be overcome. These barriers include lack of resources and the physical design of some school buildings, that do not enable access for all. Some Head teachers in Abbott's study go beyond the structural barriers. For instance, the importance of leadership was emphasized to be a fundamental factor for successful inclusion, and most of the interviewed head teachers were aware that their role is to promote the culture of inclusion in the whole school. There was also the view that some mainstream teachers have lack of knowledge and skills with regard to special needs, as Initial Teacher Education does not fully prepare student teachers for inclusive classrooms. Abbott's participant head teachers also emphasised the importance of the role of colleagues in the special sector sharing their expertise with mainstream teachers. In addition, some mainstream teachers' attitudes reflect the medical model of understanding disability, which is considered by these head teachers to present barriers to inclusion, which could inhibit the potential of every child in mainstream schools. Abbott's (2006, p.639) interpretation of these findings is that it is to be expected that:

the head teachers wanted to portray their schools as promoting and developing inclusion, but it was also clear that they recognized how far this was being achieved as well as the challenges of putting it into practice.

Another study conducted by Khochen and Radford (2012) in Lebanon, explored the attitudes of teachers and head teachers towards inclusion of students with a disability in mainstream primary schools. Khochen and Radford used a mixed method approach to collect data. They found in general, the interviewed head teachers had positive attitudes towards having students with disabilities enrolled in their schools. There was however, a common belief that not all students, with a disability, can be successfully included, as the head teachers found it most difficult to include students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and students that they describe as having mental disability. It was also clear that the head teachers

wanted better support in terms of financial support and staffing training. These attitudes were based on the belief that inclusion can be successful if implemented appropriately.

Based on these perspectives, successful inclusion requires a consideration to develop the culture of the school and the attitudes towards disability within the school culture as well as accepting all learners with an aim to achieve their well-being. As indicated by Armstrong (2005) implementing inclusion, involves the removal of cultural and environmental barriers in order to increase the participation of students with disability in mainstream school. In this regard, schools' attempts to provide inclusion is not only seen and worked upon as making additional provision for children with special needs. However, central in this is effective educational leadership (Hassanien, 2015). Thus, head teachers positive perspectives towards inclusion contribute to enhanced inclusive values and practices and create an educational environment for all children regardless of their conditions.

The success of inclusive education practice depends not only on teachers', head teachers' perspectives but also parents' perspectives play a central role in developing effective inclusive practice (UNESCO, 1994). Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat (2014) indicate that, "Parents of children with special needs have been described as one of the main factors behind the push towards inclusive education in many countries". Thus, parents' perspectives towards inclusion of students with special needs are important factors relating to inclusive education because their views, feelings, and beliefs are likely to have a strong effect on the practice of inclusion, as such views could either encourage or reject inclusion. As Martin (2002) indicates, the outcome of inclusive education depends largely on the attitudes and beliefs of parents of children with or without special needs. In consideration of this view, several studies have examined parents' perspectives towards inclusion (Gasteiger-Klicpera et al., 2013; Abu-Hamour & Muhaidat, 2014; O'Connor, 2007; Shipley, 1995).

Parents' attitudes towards inclusive education have been explored in a systematic literature review conducted by de Boer et al. (2010). A review of the literature resulted in 10 studies showing that parents are divided in their attitudes towards inclusion. The review showed that overall, 5 of the 10 studies were positive and the others were neutral, with the studies using parents of typically developing and

disabled children. However, the researchers further reported that parents of children with disabilities were not clearly positive and found that parents of children with severe disabilities were least positive. However, parents of children with special needs reported various concerns, including the availability of services in regular schools and individualised instruction. Several variables were found which related to parents' attitudes, such as socio-economic status, education level, experience with inclusion, and type of disability. Another study by Narumanchi and Bhargava (2011) identified that parents of typically developing students expressed the view that teachers in an inclusive school need to be trained and develop a positive attitude towards children with special needs. These parents felt that inclusion would be beneficial for subjects such as art, music, singing, and sports but separate education would be more appropriate for academic subjects. Furthermore, Narumanchi and Bhargava pointed out that parents were apprehensive, particularly about the effect of full inclusive education on typically developing children, as they tend to get disturbed by disabled children, while children with special needs are often not able to meet the standards set for typically developing children. Thus, although parents might have positive attitudes towards inclusion of disabled children, they appear to prefer separate classes for academic subjects. Nevertheless, some parents of children without disability believe that their children can benefit both socially and academically from inclusion because of the increase of the available supportive teaching resources inside the classroom (Elzein, 2009; Tichenor et al., 2000).

Tensions within parents' perspectives were also been found by Westling-Allodi (2007), who conducted a small-scale study of Swedish parents with children with intellectual disabilities who were placed in separate units in mainstream schools. The study found that the parents reflected different attitudes about the suitability of these units for their children. Some were positive about such units, however others were critical, indicating that learning is better in mainstream classes. Other parents were unsure and critical of the low expectations held by the staff towards their children, stating that they might get the resources and their preferred setting, but they felt that if the staff were not supportive nothing could be achieved.

Furthermore, parents' understanding of disability could affect their attitudes towards inclusion. In this regard Cole (2008) linked preference to disability models, and

found that parents' perspectives fell into three groups. Parents' responses in group one appeared to prefer a social model approach, suggesting that they choose inclusive schooling for their children with the aim of removing organisational and pedagogical barriers to their children's learning and increasing their children's acceptance within mainstream settings. These parents, Cole claims, did not seem too concerned with within-child factors and did not mention their children's impairment labels; instead, they were skeptical about professional judgments about their children. In the second group the parents initially committed to mainstream schools, but changed to special schools. These parents felt that their children were being excluded, consequently, they began to search for a more welcoming environment, such as that offered by special schools (Cole, 2008, p.178). Accordingly:

A social model approach might suggest that parents are looking for environments where there are fewer barriers to their children's inclusion. For some children and parents, in the current context, they are stuck between a rock and a hard place, and, ironically perhaps, it is special school, which becomes the only place where parents feel their children can be included.

Considering the above mentioned concerns, parents' motives to place their disabled child in a regular school vary, as it is clear that not all parents prefer a mainstream school for their child. Parents responses in the third group, in Cole's study, preferred their children to be educated in special schools without ever considering a mainstream school. Accordingly, these parents did not focus as much on the barriers to their children's learning and tended to concentrate on medicalised discourses and within-child factors; that is, these parents seemed more interested in the medical understanding of their children's disabilities (Cole, 2008). However, in Landsman's (2005) US study of mothers of children with disabilities from a range of social backgrounds, it was not easy to link such mothers' perspectives to a specific model of disability. Landsman (2005) found that these mothers' concepts of disabilities did not comply simply with either medical or social assumptions. However, their concepts tended to correspond with a medical model, in seeking to improve opportunities for enhancing their child's functionings, but complied with a social model in rejecting aspects of a problem-based view of impairment. Landsman concluded that neither the medical nor the social models fully accounted for the parents' perspectives, as they drew on aspects of both.

Various socio-economic and cultural factors have been considered in the social construction of disability. For example, Priestley (2009) mentions religious and cultural values, industrial development, geographical mobility, capitalist wage economy, literacy and numeracy, surveillance and incarceration, among others. Šiška and Habib (2013) indicate that strongly religious societies tend to have negative attitudes towards disability. For example, in Bangladesh society blames mothers who give birth to a disabled child, as it is believed that Allah is punishing them for their wrong doing. These different perspectives, regarding disability, could lead to different attitudes towards inclusion. In this regard, Finkelstein (2001) argues that the medical understanding of disability has hampered the progress of inclusive education reform because the model proposes that a child who has difficulties in learning means that something is wrong with the child and so the child should be separated and taught in special settings. This indicates that parental engagement with various models of disability influences their perspectives towards mainstream and special schooling.

There is a gap in the literature that considers the social construction of disability and its influence on parents' and teachers' perspectives towards inclusion, as studies in this area are few. Therefore, one aim of the current study is to investigate head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion from the viewpoint of different models of disability. This research investigation will contribute to filling such gaps in the literature.

Research literature indicates that there is a wide range of perspectives amongst parents related to the placement of disabled children in educational settings. These divergent results, evident in the literature, will be further explored and most importantly, in the current study, parents' perspectives will be explored within a different cultural context, as the different cultural context may give rise to different assumptions about disability. It is supposed that such cultural assumptions towards disability may affect teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion, as cultural and contextual factors appear to play an important role in teachers' and parents' understanding of and attitudes towards inclusion (Hassanein, 2010). For instance, Šiška and Habib (2013, pp.402-403) indicate in their study, towards

disability and inclusion in Bangladesh, that understanding the causes of disability opens doors for understanding the inclusion process, arguing that:

The notion of disability has been changing to focus on social and environmental factors rather than on individual fault. Growing understanding about disability leads to a higher acceptance of disability; that it is not a personal tragedy but rather a flawed social response. Disability thinking has shifted from the medical model to the social model. The paradigm of the social model of disability is not only evolving in its way of thinking but also in the activities of the disability movement from charity to rights.

It is worth mentioning here that several studies on parents' perspectives towards inclusion, (e.g., Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014; Abu-Hamour & Muhaidat, 2014; de Boer et al., 2010; Elkins et al., 2003) have used traditional quantitative, positivist research methods (questionnaire), which as Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicate are less likely to consider the role of the social and contextual aspects and the complexities of understanding inclusion and disability. To add to the limited qualitative literature available, I will use multiple qualitative methods, such as interview and CDA to identify the affect of the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait on its practices and perspectives. What are the rights of teachers and parents in the policy position - to be supported and have their voices considered in such a policy? These issues are significantly important for effective inclusive education practices, as indicated by O'Connor (2007, p.539):

The emergence of increasingly cooperative practice and understanding between parents and professionals is of particular significance as inclusion has assumed greater visibility in governmental, educational and social policy.

The current study will focus on parents, as well as head teachers and teachers, to explore their perspectives and understanding of disability and inclusion and how all these affect the practice of inclusion in Kuwait. No study regarding the views of parents of non-disabled and "slow learner" students, who have experience with inclusion practice, has been conducted in Kuwait. This qualitative research study will draw out the views, perceptions and attitudes of the participants in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education and how it functions within existing Kuwaiti policy.

Inclusive education in the Middle East

Developing and introducing inclusion in an education system requires positive attitudes from the community's members and strong educational foundations to improve inputs, processes, environments, and learning of students, educators, and other stakeholders to achieve meaningful outcomes from educational experiences (UNESCO, 2009). In this regard, researchers (e.g., Sakız and Woods ,2015; Gaad, 2004) in Middle East countries have investigated the situation of inclusive education and the challenges that could stifle achieving inclusion in their own country's context.

In Turkey, for example Sakız and Woods (2015) discuss the progress of including students with disabilities within mainstream schools, and the legislative attempts to achieve inclusive education. Sakız and Woods indicate that in Turkey all aspects of the system (within school, society, and policy level) are considered as barriers to full inclusion of students with disabilities. They highlight some main issues which are stifling inclusion in Turkey, such as the lack of understanding of, and support for, inclusion of students with disabilities in Turkish society at large. They argue that inclusion is perceived as a type of integration of special education into mainstream schools by means of a separate form of provision. Further, the identification and placement of students with disabilities depends on medical and educational diagnoses and such a process reflects the medical model which is in contrast with the principles of inclusion which are based on a social model of understanding disability. Accordingly, inclusion is not seen in its holistic concept, principles and philosophy; it is still perceived under the umbrella of special education in the Turkish context. Such a situation can lead to confusion in the process of implementing inclusive education.

Gaad (2004) highlights traditional cultural issues and values that shape attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities. Three countries were identified in Gaad's study with two being from the Middle East, Egypt in North Africa and the United Arab Emirates in Asia. Gaad's cultural knowledge, as a Muslim and Arabic native speaker was helpful in assessing cultural understandings towards individuals with disabilities in these countries as well as helping in assuring the validity of data selection, collection and analysis. Gaad (2004) indicates that Egypt, although a North African country has Arabic and mainly Islamic cultural foundations.

The aim of Gaad's study was to consider cultural affects on the provision of inclusion of these children in mainstream schools. Interviews with parents and teachers were conducted. Further, a review of the literature on the movements for inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in these countries was considered by the researcher. A study the author undertook in 1998 examined educational options for children with Down's Syndrome. The findings indicated that in Egypt, negative attitudes towards families of children with intellectual disabilities, particularly with Down's Syndrome, was reported and as stated by parents, children with such a disability were kept in their houses. The reason for this finding is that these children were facing rejection by non-disabled individuals in their society, especially children, because of their intellectual disability and because they shared distinctive facial and physical characteristics. Consequently, such children have to put up with labelling and bullying from other non-disabled children. In the United Arab Emirates, children with intellectual disabilities are still a long way from inclusion. Parents in Gaad's study did not know about inclusion, and had limited knowledge about the concept of inclusion. The common understanding among the parents interviewed was that inclusion meant being in the neighbourhood school, but in a separate class. Teachers on the other hand accepted the idea of inclusion in general, but not for those with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion for some and exclusion for others makes the concept of inclusion worthless. Gaad (2004) argues that there is a sense of anti-inclusion found in these countries in their own cultural contexts. This is caused because of cultural beliefs about disabled students, particularly children with intellectual disabilities who are considered as different individuals with limited ability. Gaad (2004, p.312) concludes that:

It is very difficult to discuss educational services offered to children with intellectual disabilities or any form of disabilities without reflecting on the tenets of each society's traditional life and attitudes.

Although not in the Middle East, the findings from a survey study conducted by Sukumaran et al. (2015) in Malaysian integrated preschools coincide with the findings of this current study's analysis of Kuwait's current policy and practice towards inclusive practice, which is described as 'excluding the included'. Sukumaran et al's. study was conducted with both regular and special education teachers and asked them about the level and nature of inclusion taking place in their

preschools. The findings show little evidence that practices of inclusion were taking place in the preschools that were surveyed, and the situation might be described more as segregation practices, as there were not many opportunities for interaction between non-disabled and students with special needs. Further, such opportunities were very limited and occurred only in non-academic activities such as at lunch times or on the playground. Consequently, opportunities for interaction mostly took place by chance without much planning on the part of the teachers. Furthermore, Sukumaran et al. (2015) argue that in Malaysia there is legislation in place to support the rights of persons with special needs to an education on an equal basis to those without special needs. However, there is no legislation with regard to inclusion that reflects the concept of inclusion, as presented specifically in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The authors concluded that in the Malaysian context:

government support and legislations alone cannot guarantee inclusion; instead successful inclusion must be supported with positive attitudes, significant processes and research evidence on how inclusive education can effectively meet the individual needs of children with special needs. (Sukumaran et al., 2015, p.837)

From these studies, conclusions can be drawn in relation to developing countries in the Middle East, in that they face context specific challenges that could hinder the development of inclusive education. Such challenges include negative cultural perceptions about disability. In this regard, Motala (2000) states that developing countries are said to face challenges when it comes to effective inclusion of children with disability into mainstream schools. Thus, it could be argued that for most of these countries the challenges to inclusion are determined by negative cultural understandings of disability, limited policy, lack of governmental support and ideologies around disability, rather than the actual needs of special needs learners.

Summary

To summarise, this chapter has discussed the concept of inclusion and how disability is understood via the three models of understanding disability, namely the medical, social and capability models. Understanding disability is one of the key issues that the current study highlights, as the way of understanding disability could play its role in affecting the participants' perspectives towards inclusion and the way of

implementing and practicing inclusive education. Then, Ainscow and Miles' Framework (2009), which includes four important and fundamental elements of the development of inclusive education is described and adopted. This framework includes key themes and issues, that the current study seeks to highlight, being policy, concepts, the practice of inclusion, and structures and systems. These four elements are considered to be important in the development of inclusive education and which the research questions of this study aim to explore. The significance of this literature review is to establish a wider consideration of the factors that could affect head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion and its practice. In addition, this literature review provides the researcher an overview of, and background to, other issues related to inclusion within different contexts. It has assisted the researcher to be attentive to and aware of these issues during the planning and implementation of the research process.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Design of the Study

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology, design and framework of the study. The chapter starts with a description of the different research paradigms, followed by the rationale for using the interpretive paradigm in the current study and highlighting the research design. Then, data collection procedures, including design and administration of instruments through the fieldwork process are described. Finally, the sampling framework, data analysis approach, and the ethical considerations are addressed.

Introducing the research paradigms

Henning et al. (2004) define a paradigm as a theory or belief system that guides the researcher in studying an educational phenomenon. It reflects the researcher's perceptions of the world and understanding of how things are connected (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The paradigm is a significant theoretical framework that illuminates essential philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions associated with the proposed research (Cohen et al., 2007; Patton, 1990; Creswell, 1994). Therefore, researchers should consider the definitions to articulate such assumptions related to the research to be undertaken. According to Guba (1990, p.18) these questions are formulated as:

(1) Ontological: what is the nature of the "knowable"? Or, what is the nature of "reality"? (2) Epistemological: what is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)? (3) Methodological: how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?.

Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that there are three main paradigms: positivist, interpretive and critical in the social and human sciences, and they vary in terms of their basic theoretical assumptions. It was crucial to understand the assumptions of each paradigm in order to determine the suitable paradigm for the current study.

The first paradigm is positivist, scientific/empirical, quantitative, and predictive (Creswell, 2003). Positivists examine causes that influence outcomes, which reflect the traditional scientific approach to problem solving. Thus, this approach assumes a single reality that can be broken down into variables, which when correctly identified and isolated can be used to establish cause and affect relationships. Positivist research provides knowledge based on careful observation and objective assessment of reality. Consequently, positivists support the use of the scientific method in research, particularly the use of experimental and quantitative methods to test and verify hypotheses (Creswell, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although the scientific paradigm emphasises quantitative data, qualitative data can also be utilised when appropriate (Ernest, 1994). Quantitative research can produce findings that could be generalised to other situations (Creswell, 2003).

Secondly, the critical paradigm emerged from critical theory and the conviction that research is conducted for "the emancipation of individuals and groups in an egalitarian society" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 26). This paradigm emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, arguing that the post structural laws and theories enforced by positivist assumptions do not consider social justice issues and are not appropriate for marginalised individuals or groups (Creswell, 2003). The critical paradigm contradicts the perspective of positivism, which disregards the social context (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 1998). The intention of critical educational research is to emphasise equality and democracy for all its members. However, simply providing an account of society and its behaviours does not achieve this; the purpose should be to facilitate change, rather than simply understand the situations and phenomena (Cohen et al., 2000). Accordingly, studies need to incorporate an action agenda to influence the lives of the participants as well as the functioning of various institutions and consider specific social issues, such as "empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation" (Creswell, 2003, p.10).

The third paradigm is the interpretive paradigm, with its philosophical assumptions that guide the researcher, can also be called the "anti positivist" paradigm, as it developed as a reaction to positivism. It emphasises the ability of individuals to construct meaning; some scholars have perceived this paradigm as constructivist (Cohen et al., 2000). Constructivism describes the specific contexts in which people

live and work, with an aim to explore the historical and cultural background of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The current study is designed within the interpretive paradigm because I believe that the situation of inclusive education in Kuwait and the way of understanding disability and the concept of inclusion needs to be understood in depth, particularly as research in the field of inclusive education in Kuwait is rare. Thomas and Vaughan (2004, p.112) indicate that, "We would do well to remember the words of Chairman Mao when he said that 'the longest journey begins with the first step' ". In my view, the first step in the journey of inclusive education in Kuwait is the deep investigation of the way that disability and inclusion is understood. Thus, I chose the interpretive paradigm instead of other paradigms as I believed that this paradigm would effectively help to understand this specific study phenomena and the affect of social and cultural contexts on the development and practice of inclusive education in Kuwait. In this regard, it was considered essential to establish an overview of the basic assumptions of the interpretive paradigm before outlining its adoption in this study.

Paradigm followed in this study

The current study adopted the interpretive paradigm. Schwandt (2000) explains that interpretive research is concerned mainly with meaning and seeks to understand social members' definitions of a situation. In addition, interpretivists aim to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the perspective of those who live it. Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that interpretive researchers seek comprehensive understanding of how participants in a given investigation view their world that surrounds them, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed.

I found this paradigm to be most suitable for the purpose of my study, as I believe that exploring the understanding of inclusion, in this early stage of inclusive education in Kuwait, is relevant for illuminating the concept and enhancing practice. The interpretive approach helps to understand the complexities of inclusion, particularly because inclusion can mean different things to different people within the same context (Clarke et al., 1998). Moreover, exploring the head teachers', teachers' and parents' understanding of inclusion can guide the development of interventions and the strategies which could improve the implementation of

inclusion in Kuwait. Since the current study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, it was important to review the crucial assumptions of this approach.

From the perspective of the interpretive paradigm, the ontological assumptions relate to the existence of multi-realities rather than pure facts, suggesting that reality is seen as complex, subjective, and relative rather than an objective entity. Reality is created rather than given (Cohen et al., 2007; Crotty, 2003). According to Guba (1990), social constructivists believe that various constructions of the social actors produce different realities because of individual differences and differences in individuals' lived experiences, these constructions are likely to differ and diverge.

The supporters of the interpretive paradigm hold a constructivist epistemology which assumes that participants construct their own knowledge of the situation or the event. This means that participants have their own unique interpretation of events and the world cannot be known with any certainty (Ernest, 1994). Radnor (1994) suggests that when we are trying to understand what others mean, we rely on our interpretations, and through language, we are able to reconstruct experiences.

In order to gain better understanding of the epistemological assumptions that guide researchers in educational and social research, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) mention that two main issues, surrounding the debate of epistemology, should be addressed. The first is associated with the relationship between the researcher and the researched world. While the positivist or scientific adherents view this relationship as isolated or "value free", the proponents of the interpretive paradigm believe that this process is an interactive process; knowledge is either mediated through the researcher (value-mediated) or is a result of negotiation and agreement between researchers and participants. The second issue is related to the way in which knowledge is acquired. A scientific approach is often seen as a deductive approach, whereby propositions or hypotheses are reached theoretically through logical processes.

Crotty (2003, p.3; p.8) considers the epistemology of the interpretive paradigm as that which rejects the idea of objective truth waiting for us to discover it. He claims that, "meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world". Crotty says that meaning is not lying there (objectivism) and nor created by subjects (subjectivism) but constructed and generated within the

partnership of subject and object. "Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them" (Crotty, 1998, p.79). From this perspective, all knowledge, hence all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices that are developed and transmitted within an essentially social context based on interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty, 2003). Therefore, meaning cannot be described simply as objective or subjective. According to constructivism, we do not create meaning; rather, we construct meaning as we work with people and objects in the world (Crotty, 2003).

Robson (2002) claims that constructivists struggle with the idea of objective reality, which is typically known. They suppose that researchers need to understand multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. Hence, they tend to conduct interviews and observations to gain multiple perspectives. Furthermore, they consider research participants as part of the research process, helping them construct their reality. In this understanding, different people may construct different meanings in different ways about the same phenomenon. According to constructivists, individuals are constantly trying to understand the world in which they live and work. Humans are persistently interacting and engaging with the world around them, and make sense of it based on their historical and social experiences. They develop multiple subjective meanings of their experiences; thus, researchers are able to look for the complexity of views rather than simply categorise various meanings. As such, the goal of research is to rely on the participant' views of the situation under investigation. Open-ended investigation allows the researcher to listen carefully to individual experiences and views with the aim of making sense of (or interpreting) the meanings that others develop about the world (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000).

Consequently, the epistemological stance underpinning this research is a constructivist epistemology using interpretivism, as it is a socio-cultural base where multiple interactions, among different social realities in the world, are taking place. In this research I investigated the meanings held by teachers and parents about the inclusion of slow "slow learners" in mainstream schools in Kuwait. In this regard:

Social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for actions and situations. (Blaikie, 1993, p.96, cited in Crotty, 2003, p.11)

The constructivist paradigm seeks to understand the phenomenon according to the explanations and perceptions of those who are involved. In this, the reality constructed in the current study was negotiated between the researcher and the participants. The purpose of the study was to construct knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena in an attempt to get shared meanings with others. It may offer possibilities, but not certainties of the outcomes of future events (Merriam, 1998).

This study focuses on exploring head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards the idea of including "slow learners" in mainstream classrooms in Kuwait. The study's main aim is to explain and show the participants' concerns and perspectives towards inclusive education in the context of Kuwait, rather than only showing acceptance or rejection of it. This study adopted the interpretive approach because the concept of educational inclusion is relatively new in Kuwait and it is therefore important to uncover the range of meanings assigned to it by participants. This is supported by Creswell's (2003) argument that the interpretive paradigm could be very helpful in new areas of research, consequently this approach is better used in researching new topics, such as inclusion, as this may help in illuminating the concepts and developing the practice. Although inclusive education is not new in Europe, it is still in an early stage in the context of Kuwait and needs further research to better understand it. According to Brown (2005, p.256):

The concept of inclusion as a professional ideology is relatively new in the Middle East region, which is dominated by the values and beliefs of a traditional culture.

Consequently, I can only attempt to understand the social realities and the subjective knowledge of the participants about inclusion through the world in which they live and work. The current study aims to describe a situation rather than to generalise or form a law (which characterises the scientific paradigm). In particular, this study aims to understand head teachers', teachers' and parents' subjective attitudes towards inclusion, different factors underlying these perspectives, perceived barriers to inclusion and their perspectives about the changes required to practice, to enact

effective inclusion. Hence, in the context of this study, the interpretivist view points towards the participants, as White and Gunstone (1992, p.101) state being, "Meaning-making organisms, theory builders who develop hypotheses, notice patterns, and construct theories of action from their life experience". Finally, the purpose of this interpretive study is to create knowledge by understanding and interpreting the studied phenomena. The generalisability of findings is not the aim of an interpretive study. Nevertheless, the in-depth nature of the inquiry assures that the findings provide insightful explanations of the phenomenon, which could be helpful to other people in similar contexts (Lichtman, 2006).

Theoretical framework adopted in this study

This study draws on the three models of disability as a theoretical framework for analysing the perspectives of participants in relation to disability and inclusive education in the current study. This means that these models offer a framework for understanding the different perspectives, in relation to disability and inclusive education, as it can help explain or understand the participants' perspectives, related to inclusive education. These perspectives are understood within the three models of understanding disability: medical model, social model, capability model. This approach allowed me to gain some understanding about the concept of inclusion in the context of Kuwait and how disability is understood. Using the interpretive paradigm helps the researcher examine the insider's point of view regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, I did not limit the process of analysing to the three models only, but the three models helped to explain the data. Furthermore, caution was taken not to impose my expectations on the data. This was achieved through examining the data several times and letting the categories or the themes emerge from the data as is explained further, below.

Research methodology

According to Wellington (2000), methodology aims to describe, evaluate and to justify the use of particular methods. For Crotty (2003) it provides a rationale for the choice of a particular method and links it to the desired outcomes. This can lead to different kinds of research approaches needing different kinds of methodologies, in order to reach the desired outcomes and answer the research questions. The methodological approach followed in this study is case study as one of the

qualitative approaches where different qualitative techniques are used for data collection in order to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Case studies have been frequently adopted to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political, and other phenomena. Overall, case studies have been utilised to investigate complex social phenomena. Stake (1995) indicates that case study can involve a single individual or a group at a single site or multiple sites, and it can focus on a single issue or multiple issues. The current study includes several cases, thus it is a collective case study. According to Stake (2000, p.437), collective case study investigates more than one case to assess "a phenomenon, population, or general condition". This approach is based on the assumption that focusing on a number of cases increases comprehension and theorising (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Similarly, Yin (2009) recommends using a multiple-case study design because it allows drawing analytic conclusions that are more precise. Furthermore, case study helps the researcher develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Thus, studying multiple cases (head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion of "slow learners") allowed me to collect, analyse, and develop more powerful descriptions and explanations. The data were collected at specific sites, as the teachers and head teachers were interviewed at their schools as well as parents in their child's school, and the focus was on the issue of inclusion, rather than on the case.

Research design

The current study employed a qualitative research methodology to gain insights into the nature of head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusive education in Kuwait. Qualitative research is likely to yield detailed information about participants, including their experiences and the meanings of these experiences (Creswell, 2008). In addition, the need to present a detailed view of inclusive education in Kuwait encouraged my decision to conduct a qualitative study, especially because of the limited number of qualitative studies in the field of special education in Kuwait. To understand the complex perspectives and beliefs of the participants towards inclusive education, exploratory methods were used to capture and deeply understand the phenomena. As Creswell (2012, p.103) indicates, "the qualitative researcher seeks to explore and understand one single phenomenon".

In the present study, the data were collected using two qualitative techniques: semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

The research methods

Interview

Kvale (2007, p.5) states that the interview is a specific form of interaction between an interviewer and interviewee that produces knowledge, indicating that, "Conversations are an old way of obtaining systematic knowledge". Social science studies have used qualitative interviewing extensively, particularly in the field of education (Kvale, 2007; Silverman, 2006). Individuals talk with each other, they interact, pose questions and answer questions, and based on these conversations they learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes, as well as the world in which they live. In an interview conversation, the researcher enquires about participants' perceptions of the world, their dreams, fears and hopes in addition to their school situation, work situation, family, and social life. The research interview helps researchers construct knowledge based on their interaction with interviewees and captures the experiences and lived meaning of the individuals' world allowing the subject to explain their situation in their own words (Kvale, 2007).

Social and educational research commonly uses interviews, which can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Flick, 2006; Robson, 2002). The structured interview comprises pre-arranged questions with fixed wording prepared in advance, thus the interviewer is not free to make modifications. In contrast, the unstructured interview is conducted without a predetermined schedule, allowing the conversation to develop throughout the interview. The semi-structured interview combines the two previous types. It is more flexible and less structured. The interviewer leads the interview and although the questions are formulated prior to the interview, their ordering varies and supporting questions emerge as the interview unfolds (Radnor, 1994). These questions guide the interview that aims to investigate issues or topics of interest (Merriam, 1998). Silverman (2006) states that effective qualitative interviewing achieves depth and complexity that other approaches may not achieve. Thus, in this study using "interviewing can be an exciting way of doing strong and valuable research" (Kvale, 2007, p.8).

Interviews allow researchers to gather information about participants' interpretations of the world and their perceptions of different situations that they encounter. As Cohen et al. (2007, p. 267) indicate, "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life it is part of life itself". It is considered one of the most important methods of qualitative research. Mertens (2010) indicates that most qualitative researchers decide to employ interview methods because they can gather significant information. Additionally, it is an essential method that allows the researcher to understand others through investigating individuals' beliefs, experiences, wishes, and intentions in their own words (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Wellington (2000) claims that one-to-one dialogue is an excellent tool for investigating the interviewee's feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.

Interviews utilise a flexible approach to achieve the desired aims. Furthermore, interviews can provide rich data because the researcher can ask additional questions to elaborate or clarify the responses and they can provide a detailed explanation of a particular context (Drever, 1995). In addition, Cohen et al. (2007, p.349) state that, "the interviewer can press not only for complete answers, but also for responses about complex and deep issues". Finally, interviews allow participants to express their thoughts, and they allow researchers to collect a wide range of data on people's points of view, feelings, experiences, motivation, and reasoning (Drever, 1995). Through interviews, researchers are able to assess people's knowledge as well as their likes, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs (Tuckman, 1972; Drever, 1995). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather comprehensive information regarding the participants' perspectives and understanding of inclusive education, their views of what needs to be changed or adjusted, and the reasons underlying their judgments. This was because the participants were able to express their views openly and clearly. In addition, the conversations not only gathered the participants' ideas, but also helped to evaluate and clarify their responses (Burns, 2000).

However, it is worth mentioning that interview has some limitations. The use of interview has been criticised on the grounds that the findings from qualitative interviews are not generalizable (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Bryman, 2001). However, it has been suggested that in general "it is the quality of the theoretical

inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization" (Bryman, 2001, p.283). The thought, planning and preparation, undertaken before the interviews are conducted, provide a solid foundation for the quality of these theoretical inferences. However, overall interview methods are particularly labour intensive (Seidman, 2013). Interview, as a method has been criticised in terms of the challenges that it presents to the individual qualitative researcher as the process of interviewing can be time consuming and costly. First, the researcher has to conceptualise the project, then establish access by contacting potential participants and scheduling interviews with them. Subsequently, the interview data has to be transcribed and the analysis begun, at which point the researcher identifies the theoretical inferences and is able to finally share the learned knowledge (Bourdieu et al., 1999). The next section describes how semi-structured interview was used in this study.

Using semi-structured interview in the current study

This study used semi-structured interview "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 2007, p.8) (see Appendix 11, semi-structured interview schedule). Further, according to Drever (1995, p.1):

Semi-structured means that the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance what grounds to be covered and what main questions are to be asked.

At the same time, the semi-structured interview allows researchers to change the sequence and form of questions to obtain specific answers (Kvale, 2007). Similarly, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) state that the semi-structured interview permits the interviewer to discuss topics that have not been considered before, but emerge during the interview. Thus, semi-structured interviews have the flexibility to provide first-hand perspectives of the interviewees, help generate hypotheses based on these perspectives, and provide understanding of what the respondents perceive as important (Randor, 1994). An interviewee should not be regarded as a 'vessel of answers' as indicated by Holsten and Gubrium (1995, p.30 cited in Watson, 2006, p.369):

The 'vessel of answers' model, referring instead to the 'stock of knowledge' that the respondent draws on in the interview situation. This knowledge is

'simultaneously substantive, reflexive and emergent'. The authors suggest that, as the interview proceeds, the respondent selectively accesses, reflects on and constructs this knowledge in a way that is dependent on the self-assigned role adopted by the narrator in response to the questions asked, i.e. in response to the self invoked by the interviewer at that point.

From this perspective, the aim of the interviewer is to activate these different ways of knowing during the interview and interacting with the interviewee as:

a collaborative construction in which the meaning and the way they are constructed depend on both the interviewer and the interviewee as 'active agents' in the interview'. (Watson, 2006, p.369)

The researcher is always implicated within the research and hence the data is never entirely 'objective'. The interviewer should have some skills to reflect on the interviewee's answers by engaging with the emerged ideas and answers to make sure that a high level of understanding can be reached. In the current study, using semi-structured interview allowed me to become aware of the participants' views and knowledge without imposing my own views on the research situation. To do so, I used the semi-structured interview concept, as a method of preparation for the interviews, to prepare main questions about certain themes as well as sub-questions within the topics. The interview, as a method, is not simply a direct question and answer process but rather it requires profound reflection and engagement with the information which may be generated during the interview (Kvale, 2007). During the semi-structured interviews, my intention was that the participants should be able to freely discuss the significant issues, within the semi-structured interview framework. Subsequently, a high level of understanding was reached in the interviews, which helped me later to engage with the answers and reflect on them during the analysis process.

In the current study, interviews with female head teachers, teachers and mothers were used to collect the qualitative data. I used various procedures to ensure the success of the interviews: all interviews were conducted in the Arabic language and in convenient settings; all interviews were recorded with a portable digital recorder; I selected quiet locations in which participants felt comfortable to express their ideas and expand upon their own answers; I introduced the purpose and significance of the study at the beginning of each interview and obtained each participant's consent prior

to beginning the interview.

Documents

Documents can be a valuable source of information in qualitative research. Documents can be public and private records, including newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, and letters, about a site or study participants. These sources provide valuable information about studied phenomena in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012). Public documents can include minutes from meetings, official memos, records in the public domain, and archival material in libraries. Private documents consist of personal journals and diaries, letters, personal notes, and individual jottings. Documents are a good source for text (word) data, as they are in the language and words that the participants can understand. They can also be analysed without the transcription that is required with observation or interview data. On the other hand, documents are sometimes difficult to locate and obtain, as some information may not be available to the public. Information may be available only in selected archives, which may require the researcher to travel. Further, the documents may be incomplete, inauthentic, or inaccurate (Creswell, 2012; Forster, 1994).

In the present study, I collected official documents on inclusive education, from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, with an aim to understand inclusion practices by investigating the strategies, policies, and laws adopted by the Kuwaiti government. After obtaining permission to use the documents, I critically analysed their content, examined their accuracy, completeness, and usefulness in answering the research questions (Creswell, 2012). Critical discourse analysis was used to analyse the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. Therefore, it was important to consider the meaning of CDA, its main assumptions, and its use in the current study. An overview of this approach is highlighted in the following section.

Concept and main assumptions of discourse analysis

Generally speaking, according to Jaworski and Coupland (2006, p.3):

discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations - it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society.

Therefore, discourse analysis searches for patterns of language in texts while bearing in mind the relationship of language within its social and cultural context, thus it shapes social order. In sum, texts can change or contribute to change in people's beliefs, attitudes, actions, or social relations, as well as in the material world (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse analysis also examines the ways through which language presents different worldviews and different understandings as well as the ways in which the discourse constructs the views of the world and identities (Paltridge, 2012). Discourse analysis evaluates both spoken and written interactions (Paltridge, 2012), although Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) claim that its primary purpose is to be meaningful to the user and to provide a deeper comprehension of texts. Thus, this approach helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis is concerned with the relationship of "discourse with social and cultural issues, such as race, politics, gender, and identity, and inquires about the implications of its use" (Paltridge, 2012, p.186). That is, it aims to compare what people say and do with how they view the world themselves and their relationships. Critical discourse analysis suggests that the relationship between language and meaning is not random and is generally selected and used to achieve a particular purpose. In particular, language and meaning is influenced by what is intended to be achieved; the meanings, the beliefs and intentions affect the choice of a particular type or style of approach (Kress, 1990). As Eggins (1994, p.10) argues:

Whatever genre we are involved in, and whatever the register of the situation, our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives we adopt.

"Critical discourse analysis has been defined in many ways, so it is difficult to present a complete, unified picture of the concept" (Paltridge, 2012, p.187). However, Fairclough (1999, p.97) provides a clear definition which provided the rationale for its use in this study:

CDA sets out to make visible through analysis, and to criticize, connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations (ideologies, power relations) which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts.

This approach further aims to reveal some of the underlying values, positions, and perspectives that are often concealed. Rogers (2004, p.6) states that discourses, "are always socially, politically, racially, and economically loaded". Critical discourse analysis assumes that language use is always social and that discourse "reflects and constructs the social world" (Rogers, 2011, p.1). This study is situated within the worldview identified by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the influences are Kuwaiti society, culture and Islam. Van Dijk (1993, p. 252) suggests that it is important to adopt a particular view point when adopting CDA:

Unlike other discourse analysis, (should) take an explicit socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Their perspective if possible is that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality.

How CDA is used in the current study

Kress (1990, p.85) states that:

Critical discourse analysts hope to bring about change not only to the discursive practices, but also to the socio-political practices and structures supporting the discursive practices.

In order to present a reliable analysis of the current assumptions which underpin inclusion in Kuwait, either in the policy document or through the participants' views, it is important to understand the cultural context of the studied phenomenon as Martin (2001, cited in Fairclough, 2003, p.151) argues, "If you don't know what the people involved in a text are doing and don't understand their culture then you can't make sense of their text".

Therefore, to understand the meaning of the text or speech, it is necessary to know something about the situational and cultural context in which the writer or speaker is located. This position supports the argument of several researchers, for example, Armstrong et al. (2000, p.7) state that, "policies do not exist in a vacuum; they reflect underlying ideologies and assumptions in a society". Further, Firth (1935, p.37) suggests that, "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual". However, these meanings can change over time according to particular contexts and reflect changes in social, cultural, and ideological circumstances (Paltridge, 2012). Additionally, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) emphasise that to improve the understanding of the text, it is important to consider its socio-cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, discourses, particularly discourses on social life, may use different vocabularies that are however likely to overlap substantially. Different discourses may use the same words differently; therefore, it is important to examine semantic relations in order to identify these differences (Fairclough, 2003). This point helped to clarify the definitions of inclusion adopted by the Kuwaiti policy document to understand the overlapping of terms, such as inclusion and integration. To sum up, CDA is used to explore the ideological, cultural and social issues of understanding disability and inclusive education, religion and the power relationships. I sought to answer the following questions: How have local cultural contexts shaped the discourse of the Kuwaiti policy text of inclusion? How have global policy contexts shaped Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education? What are the discourses around inclusion that have shaped policy? In what way are the rights and voices of "slow learners" and their parents silenced? Moreover, the social effects of the texts could increase understanding of the current inclusive educational practices in Kuwait.

Fairclough (2003) argues that texts, as elements of social events, could have causal effects and produce change. At the minimum, texts can change given knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Disability and inclusion in the context of Kuwait could be understood from the language used in the policy document; hence, I tried to see the role of the social and cultural concepts in shaping the language of the documents and investigated the effects of such language on the practice of inclusive education.

It has been argued that in many countries, policy makers perceive education as a major factor in determining and sustaining national identity; hence, education systems in these countries use education to cultivate desired images of the nation and its citizens (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). By analysing the policy document, it was possible to enquire about the purpose of implementing inclusion in Kuwait. Is it to foster the desired image of the state? Does the implementation of inclusion depend on a clear vision and reliable strategies?

Overall, it should be emphasised that it is not simple and straightforward to analyse policy texts because of considerable room for interpretation, even if policies are laid out explicitly; therefore, it is just as important to identify issues that are not stated as well as those that are articulated clearly and openly (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Sampling procedures

The intent of a qualitative inquiry is to develop an in depth understanding of a central phenomenon rather than to generalise to a population. Thus, the qualitative researcher selects individuals and sites, which can help understand the central phenomenon, purposefully or intentionally with an aim to learn about people, events, or phenomena, in addition to an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard otherwise (Creswell, 2012). Considering the mentioned advantages, I adopted purposive sampling, which helped in the current study to select individuals with different perspectives on inclusive education. According to Wellington (2000, p.59), "purposive sampling, as its name implies, involves using or making a contact with a specific purpose in mind". Therefore, the participants, comprising head teachers, teachers and mothers, were selected purposively to gain rich data about inclusive education in Kuwait. Two primary schools were selected as the study sites. In Kuwait there is gender separation of teachers, so teachers in one school are either females or males. The chosen schools in this research had only female teachers schools. As a female researcher, it was easy for me to access female teachers' schools. Conducting interviews with male teachers would have been less comfortable than female teachers, specifically within the culture of the religion. It is worth mentioning that there are no significant differences regarding the educational services, structures and systems between the schools implementing inclusion in Kuwait. All the inclusive schools followed the same procedures, that is, special classes in mainstream school, and this was confirmed by the public authority when I was seeking permission to access these schools for the purpose of this research. In addition, the Ministry of Education provides all the schools in Kuwait with equal educational services and support. Thus, the schools in this study have been chosen as two representative inclusive schools which have special classes for "slow learners". These inclusive schools in Kuwait, are called in Arabic as 'Madarice Aldamj'. Each of these inclusive schools had five primary special classes for "slow learners". The number of students in each class was between 7-15 students. The participants included mothers of "slow learners" as well as mothers of non-disabled students. In addition, the researcher selected mainstream female teachers and special teachers who are teaching in the special classes in these two inclusive schools in Kuwait. The head teachers of both schools were also interviewed.

Patton (1990, p.169) indicates that the researcher can select "information rich" participants or sites through purposive sampling. Patton explains that information rich cases could provide an immense amount of information in relation to the purpose of the study. Thus, purposive sampling provides deeper and richer data of the phenomena under investigation. When conducting a qualitative study, the researcher may study a single site (e.g., one college campus), several sites, an individual or groups, or some combination (e.g., one or multiple schools with several students in them) (Creswell, 2012). The present study utilised purposive sampling of the sites and individuals, as summarised in Table 3.1.

Variables	Respondent subgroups	No
Type of school (Sites)	Inclusive schools	2
Phase taught	Primary	-
Gender	Female teachers Mothers	
Participants Of both schools	Mothers of "slow learners"	4
	Mothers of non-disabled students	4
	Special teachers	4
	Mainstream teachers	4
	Head teachers	2

Table 3.1 Demographics of the study participants and sites

Data analysis

Cohen et al. (2007, p. 461) claim that:

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants definitions of the situation.

The qualitative data analysis offered detailed and rich information on teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards including "slow learners" in mainstream schools in

Kuwait. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic and then I translated the codes (I describe this process fully below), which I used to identify the participants points of view, into English. Following Creswell's (2012, p.239) definition of transcription as "the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" I used audiotape recordings in order to enable me to start and stop the recordings or to play them at an appropriate speed so that I could accurately transcribe and follow what the participants said. Lapadat (2000, p.206) points out that there is no standard set of rules or criteria for the transcription process, however:

The researcher makes transcription decisions depending on purpose, theoretical stance, and analytic intent. In turn, these transcription decisions influence the analysis, interpretations, and implications for theory and practice.

Furthermore, Green et al. (1997) view transcription as a constructive and interpretive act in which the researcher positions him/herself. It could be argued that transcription is a fundamental process for analysing qualitative data. Thus, clarity of purpose in the transcription process is very useful, just as it is for other aspects of qualitative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following the guidelines of Lapadat (2000, p.216):

One useful strategy is to keep an audit trail of decision points while transcribing. What has the transcriber chosen to transcribe or not transcribe, and why? How is he or she choosing to represent particular elements?.

Before starting the transcription process, I wrote down some key points as notes to remind me of key issues to consider during the transcription process, such as the way of understanding disability, understanding inclusion, barriers of inclusion and other main aspects in the research questions. However, I transcribed points or issues that emerged because emerging issues, during the transcription process, were a very important aspect to me so I was making sure to consider them. In this regards, I transcribed all the participants' views and perspectives about the studied phenomena and found surprising and unexpected issues during this process. My main aim was to highlight the voices of teachers and mothers as clearly as possible, and to clarify the situation and the understanding of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait, via interpretations and the construction of participants' views. During the transcribing process I only omitted the segments of talk which did not relate to the research topic.

For example one of the participants talked about the medical condition of her husband and others talked about some personal problems in their lives.

The process of transcription was labour intensive, as each interview took approximately between three to seven hours to transcribe, thus I allowed one month for conducting the process. However, the process of transcription was extremely helpful and promoted intense familiarity with the data (Lapadat, 2000). Once the interviews were transcribed, they were classified into individual file folders for each participant, with the first page of the file consisting of information about the participant, such as jobs, qualifications, teaching experience for the teachers, in addition to the identification numbers and letters given for each participant for the purpose of easy reference and access to each transcript (see Appendix 1). These files assisted me in sorting and reducing the data into a manageable size and provided me with an important starting point for analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, I read all the interviews to immerse myself in order to get a broader sense of the nature of them. Then, using paper and pencil, I tagged hard copies of the interviews for aspects that appeared at this stage to be relevant and interesting and to identify the major aspects that I was paying attention to and to ensure that they were being identified across all the interview transcripts. As recommended by Kvale (2007, p.8), "reading the transcribed interviews may inspire the researcher to new interpretations of well-known phenomena". Thus, I continuously re-examined the data in an effort to deepen my understanding and interpretation of it.

It is worth mentioning here that although there are many qualitative data analysis software programs available today, the decision to use a qualitative data analysis program might be based on several factors including whether "you are adequately trained in using the program and are comfortable using computers" (Creswell, 2012, p.241). Although I had attended a two day Nvivo course (at introductory level), at the University of Stirling, to have an idea about the computer software program for qualitative data analysis, I found that it was not enough to learn how to use the program in a short period of time as I felt I would need an intensive course to learn about it and there was not enough time to do so. Furthermore, Patton (1990) suggests that qualitative data contains direct quotations of the participants' views, feelings and knowledge which computer data analysis programs are not fully able to fully deduce.

As my data emerged from the interviews that were translated from Arabic to English, the original interview data contained particular words and phrases which do not translate word-for-word to English (see Appendix 2, example of some translated text). I believe that computer analysis of data becomes less meaningful compared to a manual analysis by the researcher, as the latter provides the opportunity for the researcher to interact directly with the data. Creswell (2012, p.240) indicates that manual analysis of qualitative data may be preferred when researchers:

- Are analysing a small database (e.g., fewer than 500 pages of transcripts or field notes) and can easily keep track of files and locate text passages.
- Are not comfortable using computers or have not learned a qualitative computer software program.
- Want to be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of the machine.

After the completion of the management and organisation of the qualitative data the next step was the coding process. In the current study I followed a visual model of the coding process in qualitative research, as proposed by Creswell (2012) see Figure 3.1.

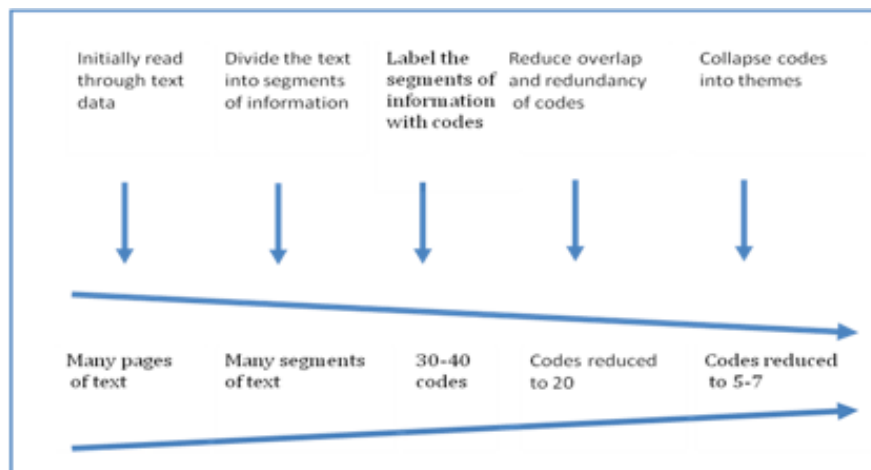


Figure 3.1 A visual model of the coding process in qualitative research
(Creswell, 2012, p. 244)

Coding is an analytical process that requires the researcher to review, select, interpret, and summarise information (Walliman, 2011). Creswell (2012) describes this process as identifying text segments, bracketing them and assigning codes or phrases that accurately describes their meaning. After reading all the transcriptions carefully and jotting down some ideas as they came to mind, I began coding each interview separately. The coding process was undertaken on the Arabic copies of the transcribed interviews (see Appendix 3 (A and B) for examples of the coding process). Then I translated the codes and the quotations, related to each code, into English. The translation was checked and verified by a professor of English at the University of Kuwait. It is worth mentioning that some terms in Arabic have different meanings in English, for instance, in the current study, participants used the word "crazy" as describing somebody who is mentally not stable, lacking in mental capacity, mad and stupid etc. For example, Mother (E) stated that, *"The current school is not equipped and prepared for inclusion, I prefer, separate buildings for students who are slow learners because of the problems that they face from other, non-disabled students who call them "crazy" and hit them some times"*. Thus, in the context of Kuwait the word "crazy" is seen as a negative term. In contrast, on most occasions when the word "crazy" is used in conversation in English it refers to wild or excited behaviour. It does not mean mentally unstable or deficient, as it seems to be in Kuwait. In English the word "crazy" is not really seen as a negative term.

In the current study, the coding process was based on two main aspects. The first was the research questions as Creswell (2012, p.247) indicates that:

In a qualitative research study, you need to analyze the data to form answers to your research questions. This process involves examining the data in detail to describe what you learned, and developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data.

According to Merriam (1998), the main aim of the analysis process is to understand the research situation and to find what theory accounts for it. The second aspect, that the coding process was based on, is the theoretical framework of the current study: the medical model, social model and capability model (see Chapter Two, p.25) for more details about the theoretical framework). During the analysis process I was mindful to let the categories or themes emerge from the data, attentive to possible new and emerging codes, and I was open to surprising and unexpected themes that

would reflect the participants' views and perspectives as well as their understanding of the studied phenomena that could be inferred from the interviews (this is exemplified further below).

Following Creswell's (2012, p.244) suggestion that, "you can state codes in the participant's actual words". I drew up a list of codes for each interview separately, the list of codes arose from the participants' actual words. Such a way of coding the data facilitated the process of being able to go back and search for participants' quotes that support such codes easily (see Appendix 4 for an example of the list of coding). The next step was to identify and group similar codes and look for redundant codes, as suggested by Creswell (2012, p.245), who indicates that the main objective of this process is:

To reduce a list of codes to a smaller, more manageable number such as 25-30. It is best not to overcode the data because, in the end, you will need to reduce the codes to a small number of themes.

The process of identifying the themes was:

By examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have most evidence to support them (Creswell, 2012, p.245).

I designed a colour and shape guide for the process of reducing the codes and categorising them under broad themes (see Appendix 5). It was essential to read the transcribed data more than once to generate the initial categories of themes and sub-themes. Grouping and categorising the codes needed a continuous process of modification, including adding emerging themes, relevant categories, and deleting non-related ones and combining others. Direct quotes from participants were used as some of the category titles, such as "The school does not implement inclusion in the practice", as one of the study aims is to, as clearly as possible, bring out the voices and perspectives of mothers and teachers.

It was challenging to combine all these data under specific themes and categories. I started reading the lists of codes and writing down each idea I came across. Different colours and shapes, available in Microsoft Word, were used to distinguish the variety of themes generated. Then I attached text segments that related to each

colour code in order to easily identify the themes that each code related to. In this way I reduced a number of codes to broad themes rather than working with an unwieldy set of codes (see Appendix 6 as an example of highlighting the list of codes to categories them under specific themes). Microsoft Word was used to cut and paste the codes from the lists of codes and categorise under specific themes. (see Appendix 7 as an example of grouping the codes). As Creswell (2012, pp.248-249) indicates there are several types of themes which authors identify:

- **Ordinary themes:** themes that a researcher might expect to find (for example: medical model of understanding disability).
- **Unexpected themes:** themes that are surprises and not expected to surface during a study (for example: the cultural beliefs such as "shame" and "the image of wholeness").
- **Hard-to-classify themes:** themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme or that overlap with several themes (for example: special teacher (3) stated that: *'there is lack of resources and lack of equipped classes and insufficient space'*, this code could fit into two themes such as barriers to inclusion, and school contexts have not changed for inclusion)
- **Major and minor themes:** themes that represent the major ideas and the minor, secondary ideas in a database (for example: understanding inclusion).

Whilst, I was assigning the themes, confusingly I found that some pieces of data fitted into more than one category or theme. A further challenge was when some categories were impossible to classify under specific themes. Thus some data or codes were classified under more than one theme. For example head teacher (A) indicated that the, *"Current name (special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name"*. This statement was appropriate to three themes: *barriers of inclusion; teachers' and parents' perspectives* and *the school does not implement inclusion in the practice*. As the statement covered more than one theme of the studied phenomena, I considered that this implies that the view expressed is highly significant.

Pilot study

A pilot study with a teacher and a mother was conducted to evaluate the semi-structured interview questions before conducting the main study. These participants were not included in the main study. A pilot study allows the researcher to identify potential problems that might occur during the interviews and survey. In addition, it allows the researcher to determine the time needed to complete the interviews. Furthermore, it allows clarification of ambiguous questions, re-adjusting the focus if necessary, changing question order, and removing any redundancies. All this helps the researcher to ensure that the main study will proceed as planned (Gillham, 2005).

Ethical issues

Since educational research is conducted with human participants, ethical issues must be considered (Wellington, 2000). Creswell (2012) indicates that ethical issues are likely to arise because qualitative research involves going to the research sites and interacting with the participants. Thus, this study followed several steps to address ethical issues. An official request was sent to the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to obtain consent for the head teacher or principal to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2007). In other words, I requested official permission before visiting the schools and conducting any interviews or distributing questionnaires to teachers (see Appendix 8). In addition, I sought general consent from the head teacher of each school. I distributed a leaflet summarising the aims and reasons for conducting this study to all participants, since they had the right to be informed about the study's goals and procedures (British Educational Research Association, 2004) (see Appendix 9). Participants were interviewed at a time convenient for them (Creswell, 2012). All participants were informed that the purpose of the study is to explore their perspectives towards including "slow learners" in mainstream classrooms. Additionally, I obtained official consent from the person in charge of any organisation that would be in any way connected to this study (see Appendix 10 (A) and (B)). In addition, as Creswell (2012) recommends, I provided a detailed description of the study procedures to the institutional review board, because the study involved human participants and the researcher could spend time in peoples' homes, workplace, or sites to gather the data.

I assured the participants of confidentiality and that their identities would be protected through the anonymising of data concerning them. The permission of all participants, to record the interviews, was sought and they were advised that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Finally, the researcher had to assure that personal information of the participants would never become public and would be stored safely in a secure location (Wellington, 2000). Accordingly, participants were assured that their data would remain anonymous and their names would be coded to hide their identities. Regarding the documentary analysis, after locating the documents related to inclusive education in Kuwait, I sought permission to use them by contacting the appropriate individuals.

Procedures

Once the proposed research had been ethically approved by the School of Education at the University of Stirling, I went to the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to receive approval to distribute the consent form to the selected participants that would allow me access to the schools. Following that, I chose two inclusive schools, which have special classes for "slow learners". I made an appointment with the head teacher in each school to discuss the aim of my study and to obtain her permission to access the school. The secretary at each school was acting as a gatekeeper, therefore they may have biases when selecting the participants. I provided each participant with a consent form and an information leaflet about the aim of my research, indicating that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Subsequently, after conducting the interviews with teachers and head teachers I then had to get permission from the head teachers to conduct interviews with the mothers in the schools. I also asked the head teachers to help me to arrange appointments with the mothers of "slow learners" and mothers of non-disabled students, in order to conduct the interviews with them. The head teachers provided me with mothers' contact numbers and I contacted them and explained to them the aim of my study, asking them if they would be happy to participate in my study. When they accepted to partake in the interviews, I arranged with them the time and the day which suited them to attend the school and take part in the interview. On the same day of each interview, and before starting conducting the interview, I provided each mother with a consent form and an information leaflet about the aim of my research,

indicating that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Trustworthiness of the current research

Lincoln and Guba (1985) create several concepts and processes to assess the quality of interpretive research, namely the trustworthiness of qualitative research, which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This criterion reflects issues traditionally discussed as validity and reliability in quantitative research (Seale, 1999). The issue of trustworthiness can enhance confidence in a particular study, as qualitative researchers have suggested several factors to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings in qualitative studies. These factors include careful attention to the study's conceptualisation and the ways in which the data are collected, analysed, and interpreted (e.g., Creswell, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, several strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and the findings of this study.

Credibility

Credibility is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid, then it is worthless (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, credibility is to ensure that the instruments used in an enquiry measure what they claim to measure. Hammersley (1990, p.57) affirms that, "by validity, I mean the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers". The interview schedule was piloted. Furthermore, I had some training about carrying out an interview during my Master's degree, in addition to reading resources (e.g., Kvale, 2007) about the processes and recommendations for conducting successful interviews before doing the interviews, as recommended by my supervisor. Understanding the phenomena of interest, through the participants' eyes and avoiding putting answers in their mouths, is considered as the most important features of the interview process (Cohen et al., 2007; Kvale, 2007). Furthermore, the richness of the data collected by different methods, in the current study, provided opportunities to examine the data from different aspects. This was a consequence of adopting strategies, such as triangulation and peer review, with an aim to ensure credibility criteria.

Triangulation

Qualitative researchers triangulate different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study. Triangulation is the most widely utilised validation strategy in educational research literature (Denzin, 1988; Creswell, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2006). For example, Creswell, (2012, p.259) indicates that triangulation is:

The process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data, (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme.

Moreover, Stake (1995) urges the utilisation of the triangulation method to validate interpretive research because it provides precise results and alternative explanations. In this study, triangulation was used to enhance the validity of the findings that emerged, based on the data collected from three different groups of participants: head teachers, teachers and mothers. In addition, data was collected through two different methods, namely CDA of policy documents and interviews. This helped to investigate the phenomena under study from different aspects, subsequently achieving greater validity because the information, which was presented in an accurate and systematic manner, drew on multiple sources of information and individuals. Such a strategy can improve the trustworthiness of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

I tried to meet the assumption of transferability by providing a deep description of my data and context. Merriam (1998, p.211) claims that transferability could be achieved with, "rich and nuanced explanations and descriptions of data". Such descriptions allow readers, "to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred". Similarly, Schofield (1993) suggests that the extent to which findings from one study are generalisable to other situations, in terms of comparability and translatability, is much clearer when qualitative research provides a clear, detailed, and in-depth description of the phenomenon under investigation. Indeed, generalisability reflects the applicability of research findings to various other settings (Cohen et al., 2007).

Therefore, in this thesis I explain the background and provide details about the cultural understanding towards disability, in which this study took place. Quoting verbatim data from a number of participants ensures that the reader has access to a part of the original data and is able to develop a picture of the socio-cultural context of the study. Thus, the findings of this study can be transferable to similar socio-cultural contexts and enabling comparisons to be made.

Dependability

The concept of dependability parallels reliability (Flick, 2006). Within the context of qualitative research, reliability has been defined as an important issue to be addressed through methodological processes. For example, Neuman (2003, p.184) believes that for qualitative researchers, "reliability means dependability of consistency, arguing that qualitative researchers use various techniques (interviews, participation, documents) to record their observations consistently". Therefore, a qualitative study can be evaluated or regarded as reliable based on the extent to which consistent methods and procedures are used. In the current study, using different methods of data collection helped to confirm that the results of the study were independent from any bias; for example, from the articulation of the policy as well as the participants' understanding of disability. In this study, it was evident that the medical model of understanding disability affects the development of inclusive education, this was clearly explicit in the articulation of the policy as well as among most of the participants' understanding of disability. Thus, the research process and justification of the findings from different resources have been provided to increase the dependability of this study. In addition, the interview questions excluded any misleading questions, as determined in the pilot study, and I made sure that during the interviews I did not indicate or point to any answer or exert any kind of influence over the interviewee, towards specific answers.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise the importance of minimising the researcher's influence on the individuals participating in a study, that is the research findings should be based on facts rather than the researchers' subjective interpretation. To verify the study's findings, integrating data from various sources to reach a conclusion requires that the qualitative data should be traceable to its source and the

logic used to interpret the findings should be clearly explained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this regard, the aim of the analysis was to understand the research situation, explore the theory that could explain the phenomenon under investigation, and make sense of the data, as suggested by Merriam (1998). In addition, care was taken not to impose my expectations on the data, but to allow the themes to emerge from the data. In addition, certain criteria were defined to allow readers to confirm the results of the study. For instance, the process of analysis, in this research, was explained systematically by providing examples drawn from the raw data, in each step of the analysis. This was done so as to help the reader to make sense of the analysis and to assure that the results are compatible with the analytical criteria.

Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological approach adopted in the current study. Research paradigms were discussed with a detailed review of the interpretive paradigm followed by a rationale for using it in the current study. The research design of this research was discussed and justified. A description of the research procedures; data collection methods, sampling and data analysis was presented. Finally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the current research were presented.

Chapter Four

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Policy Document of Inclusive Education in the Context of Kuwait

Introduction

This chapter examines the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education, *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*. In doing so it relates Kuwaiti policy to the global policy as represented by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). In examining Kuwaiti policy, CDA was used to explore the ways in which "slow learner" students and their families are positioned by policy and to explore the effects of the religious, social and cultural contexts in the articulation of such policy. Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.29) state that, "it is important to recognise the crucial role played by societal culture in shaping state policy". This allows deeper questioning about the purposes and potential effects of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education in a more holistic way.

The chapter also draws comparisons with Scottish policy as set out in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012). The aim of this is to illustrate how national policies are shaped by global policy but are also influenced by local contexts. In doing so this study seeks to identify ways in which GIRFEC has implemented most of the important principles and values that the Salamanca Statement moved forward, and to compare this with the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education.

It has been argued that 'disability and inclusion are culturally constructed' (Hassanein, 2015, p.1) as well as that inclusive education should be perceived through the interaction of global policies or global discourses with local cultural perceptions of inclusion and disability (Thomas & Johnstone, 2015). In this regard I chose CDA as an approach to analyse the relevant Kuwaiti policy because such an approach can take apart and challenge texts with the intention of identifying the beliefs and views that the texts are based on and subject them to different worldviews, experiences, and beliefs (Clark, 1995). Furthermore, using CDA attempts to link the texts with the discourse and socio-cultural practices that are

reflected, reinforced, and produced in the text (Fairclough, 1999). Thus, this approach is not purely descriptive. It provides a deeper understanding of texts and explains their aims; it investigates, describes, interprets, and explains the relationship between discourse and society (Rogers, 2011). In summary, CDA can identify socio-cultural influences by considering texts in the light of a different worldview and influences. Therefore, I found that CDA was relevant to the aim of this study as it was helpful in identifying the affect of the cultural context in forming the policy and practice of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Inclusion from an international perspective

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)

To expand the aim of "Education for All", over 300 participants from 92 governments and 25 international organisations met in Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994 to discuss the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, especially the policies that are designed to enable schools to serve all children, including SEN children. This meeting was organised by the Government of Spain in co-operation with UNESCO and the outcome was the development of a framework. This framework is guided by the following principle:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. (UNESCO,1994, p.6)

Within this framework, the term special educational needs refers to the needs that arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. Many school-aged children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs. Schools have to find ways to successfully educate all children, including those with severe disabilities who are seriously disadvantaged. The concept of the inclusive school emerged based on the general belief that children and young with special educational needs need to have access to the same educational arrangements as the majority of children (UNESCO, 1994).

Getting it right for every child (2012)

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012) is a Scottish Government led approach which aims to provide services for children and young people to better meet the needs of those they support. All main public organisations in Scotland are required to follow the GIRFEC principles, which provide common ground for all stakeholders from childcare providers, teachers, and health visitors to the voluntary sector, police, and social workers. GIRFEC is a national programme aiming to improve the outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by coordinating existing policies, practices, strategies and legislations affecting children, young people, and families. The GIRFEC structure is intended to provide "joined up solutions" to social problems by coordinating the activities of a range of agencies while fully involving parents and carers in the life of the child. As such it has a focus on the child and their family to focus on good aspects in a child's life as well as those that need to be improved (Scottish Government, 2012). The GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.7) approach considers the wellbeing of children and young people and indicates that, "It is based on understanding how children and young people develop in their families and communities and addressing their needs at the earliest possible time".

Wellbeing is at the heart of the GIRFEC principles. In this regard, it is worth mentioning here that such principles, reflected by GIRFEC, are in line with one of the main perspectives of the capability approach, that is it also "places the well-being and the agency of all children, and children with disability and difficulties in particular, at the center of the educational process" (Terzi, 2014, p.479). Terzi, (2014, p.479) argues that:

rethinking questions of inclusive education in the light of the value of educational equality – specifically conceived as capability equality, or genuine opportunities to achieve educational functionings – adds some important insights to the current debate on inclusive education.

Thus, it could be claimed that both GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) and the capability approach could provide a unified value framework for developing inclusive practices in mainstream schools.

Policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait

Kuwait is a signatory of the Salamanca Statement and in response to this has produced *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* as the policy document outlining inclusive education in Kuwait. It involves ten articles providing general instructions to schools about the process of inclusion. Unlike GIRFEC it does not include an introduction and more significantly any clarifications about its aims, values and principles. This policy is not available to public authorities, and what are termed inclusive schools as a published guide for the teachers, parents and the public; it is also not available electronically. The administrator of the special education departments, at the public authorities, is the only person who has access to the policy document. I obtained a copy of the policy after seeking permission from the Ministry of Education. It is worth mentioning that none of the participants (head teachers, teachers, parents) were aware of the contents of such a policy and all claimed that they have never even heard about it.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Education communicates with schools to inform them about policy by sending a summary of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Implementing the policy is the role of the administrators of the special education departments at the education authorities, who inform schools by holding a meeting with the head teachers of the inclusive schools and explaining the policy to them. The head teachers who were interviewed in this study however, indicated that this process has only happened once, when the law was established in 1996 and after that had not heard or received any updates in relation to the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Consequently, successive administrations at these schools, such as new head teachers, are not aware of the system of inclusion. These schools included those where I conducted interviews with their head teachers, all they know is that the special classes are for "slow learners" as they are called in Kuwait. These students are transferred from mainstream classes to the special classes as a result of repeated failure in most school subjects. The following diagram shows the relationship of the Ministry of Education with schools in terms of how the new information, laws and rules flow down to schools.

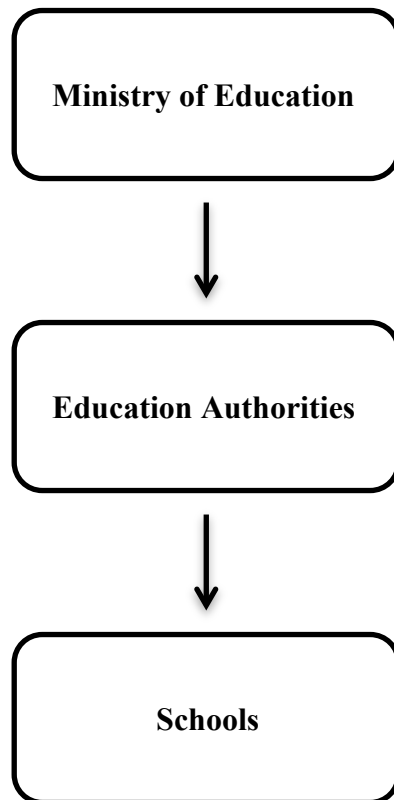


Figure: 4:1 The lack of autonomy of schools

Inclusive schools do not have any plans or awareness about the policy of inclusion to be adopted and clarification of the process of inclusion. This point will be explained further in the next chapter in order to show the gap between the policy of inclusive education and the actual practice in the schools in Kuwait. The main changes that the schools have made regarding inclusive education is allocating some special classes in the mainstream schools, and if the mainstream teacher identifies "slow learners" in the class, she/he informs the parents directly or asks the school administrator to inform the parent about the situation of their child. The school then asks the parents to do the rest of the transfer process at the public authority, which will explain to them the steps they have to adopt, such as IQ tests, before transferring their child to the special classes. However, if the parents refuse to transfer their "slow learner" child to the special classes, their child will remain in the mainstream classes without any kind of additional support. The current policy document of inclusive education has not been amended from the date of its

establishment in 1996. In the current study, the analysis of the Kuwaiti policy document was in its original Arabic form and then translated to English.

Articles under the Regulation of law 4 of 1996

In this section CDA is applied to the government legislative document *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* that proclaims the rights of "slow learners" to be educated in mainstream schools alongside their peers by creation of special classes in mainstream schools. Articles (1), (3), (4) and (5) are highlighted.

Article (1) provides a definition of "slow learners" as follows, *"Slow learners are those with an IQ of 70–85"*. It also explains the diagnostic process indicating that it means to:

Make sure that academic difficulties of the student is due mainly to the decrease in the level of mental abilities. It should not only be based on the IQ test, but academic performance, psychological, social and medical factors should be also considered.

The document starts with the definition of "slow learners", however interestingly, a definition of inclusive education and its principles are not found in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Further, it can be clearly seen that Article (1) defines "slow learners" in terms of low limited abilities by mentioning the IQ level of "slow learners". It also emphasises and encourages focusing, during the diagnostic process, on the decrease in the level of mental abilities as a main factor of the academic difficulties of "slow learners". Such discourses are overloaded with terms that reflect the assumptions in the medical model because it considers academic performance, psychological and medical factors as causes of disability, specifically with "slow learners". Vlachou (2004, p.6) claims that:

One of the major problems of policy design and implementation in the area of inclusion is its traditional, dominant and persistent focus on an individualistic deficits approach to needs.

It could be argued that the medical model of understanding, which the policy reflects, could lead to contradictions in embracing the practice of inclusion in mainstream schools because adoption of the medical model by the current policy could lead to exclusive practices, where children are separated in order to "fix their

deficits". However, inclusion calls for removing the barriers and accommodating the environment according to the child's needs (Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Liasidou (2008, p.493) argues that:

Inclusive education policy cannot be achieved through binary educational policymaking trajectories referring to different categories of children, which thereby reinforce catastrophic special education discourses.

The social factors, as one possible factor of academic difficulties, are only mentioned twice in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* in Article (1). However, the document does not clarify, for the schools, which social factors for example, school environment, attitudes or family problems should be considered and how they can be improved, if they do exist. Whereas, deficit diagnosis, categorisation and individual treatments are stressed throughout the whole policy text. In contrast, the Salamanca Statement contends that the merit of inclusive schools is:

Not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society. A change in social perspective is imperative. For far too long, the problems of people with disabilities have been compounded by a disabling society that has focused upon their impairments rather than their potential. (UNESCO, 1994, p.6-7).

Article (3) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that:

Special classes should not be separate from the mainstream classes and should not carry any names or labels that would distinguish them from the regular classroom.

This article emphasises that any labelling that would distinguish special classes from the regular classrooms in the school should be avoided. However, in the title of this regulation is the '*creation of special classes in mainstream schools*', this clearly labels such classes. The policy adopts a label and asks the schools not to use the label and does not offer any alternatives. The language of the policy is therefore contradictory. The aims of the Ministry of Education are unclear because the policy claims to support inclusion on the one hand, while on the other hand it supports exclusion. It could be argued that if special classes are different from the mainstream classes, then by definition in Article (3) they must necessarily be "separate".

The word "separate" in this article is a complex word as it denotes different

meanings because it does not clearly indicate where such classes should be; in the same building or in the same corridor or where. This exemplifies the contradictory language used in the document. This contradiction, within the legislation itself, actually reinforces labelling and categorisation. In fact, in the mainstream schools where the current study is conducted, the special classes are inside the school building, but are separate from the mainstream classes, in a separate corridor. The policy does not state clearly where such classes should be located and how they should look and what are the arrangements and facilities that are available there. The contradictory articulation of the discourse in Kuwaiti policy could lead to negative practices for inclusive, mainstream education. Brown (2005) notes that the shaky basis for inclusion encourages exclusion practices and the formation of negative attitudes towards inclusion as a utopian concept.

Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states:

The number of students in special classes should be based on their abilities and behavioural and psychological characteristics; however, there should be no more than 10 students in each special class.

And **Article (5)** addresses some important issues relating to curriculum amendments and flexibility:

Changes in the concepts or activities need to be based on evaluating the performance of these students as well as their mental characteristics and ability to understand the material.

Such discourses reflect the medical model of understanding disability, which has been criticised for the way in which it views disabled people as unable to play a meaningful role in society (Dewsbury et al., 2004). Within the policy discourse, in the context of Kuwait, the medical model of understanding disability is explicitly clear as it focuses on the ability, as well as behavioural and psychological and mental characteristics of "slow learners" as indicated in Articles (3) and (5). Such articles are overloaded with terms that reflect assumptions of the medical model and attributes the difficulties that these children face to their limited mental abilities and to their behavioural and psychological conditions. There is no consideration of the other factors that may cause challenges for these children, such as the school context, attitudes, pedagogy, wellbeing etc. Liasidou (2008, p.485) argues that:

The power of language and its multifarious configurations constitute an immense, albeit an opaque, discursive impediment that, unless deconstructed, will continue to undermine and subvert any attempts towards inclusion.

The dominance of the medical model discourse of understanding disability throughout the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*, sees the problem within the child rather than the barriers of the surrounding society and the education provided. This delays and makes the movement towards a more inclusive policy and practice, in the context of Kuwait, impossible and complicated because this is in contrast to a model of inclusion which is based on a social model of understanding disability that considers the conditions of oppression of SEN students (Slee, 1997).

The absence of inclusive thinking, that requires accepting learners' diversity, is apparent in the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education, and can also be found in the way in which those with physical disabilities are excluded in special schools, whereas they may require no special support in their academic performance. Oliver (1996, p.32) asserts that the social model of disability, "does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society as central in formulating a political understanding of disability".

Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that:

"Parents have the right to accept or refuse transfer of their child to special classes".

While the Salamanca Statement emphasises the importance of parental involvement which "should be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision making" (UNESCO, 1994, p.38). Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* pressurises parents to transfer their "slow learner" children to special classes because if they refuse to transfer their child from mainstream classes to the special classes, additional support will not be available for them in mainstream classes, as the policy does not involve this. This means the choice is no choice in effect; the parents' voices are silenced. Additionally, Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* disregards parents' rights to change their minds and decide later to transfer their child to special classes, by indicating that a written agreement form will be taken from them not to obligate the Ministry of Education to accept "slow learner" children in special classes in the future.

Article (4) coerces parents to accept transfer of their child to the special classes in the first place, because it diminishes the parents' rights to a place for their child should they change their mind, or there is a change of circumstance at a later date. It could be argued that the language of the policy gives the right of acceptance or rejection to parents, while at the same time it denies such a right by asking them to undertake a written agreement not to obligate the Ministry of Education to accept "slow learner" children in special classes in the future. This article shows the contradictory language of the text in the articulation of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*.

The recommendations of the Salamanca Statement emphasise the role of parents in the success of inclusive education, as presented in the following paragraph:

Governments should take a lead in promoting parental partnership, through both statements of policy and legislation concerning parental rights. The development of parents' associations should be promoted and their representatives involved in the design and implementation of programmes intended to enhance the education of their children. (UNESCO, 1994, p.38)

Despite the differences in meaning between integration and inclusion in English literature (see Chapter Two, p.35), in Arabic they are translated into one word "Damg" which indicates educating all children together. Therefore, there is uncertainty in the assumptions raised in the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* policy. While the policy claims that these are inclusion assumptions, I argue that these are integration assumptions.

The current policy document in Kuwait gives only vague indications of its response to inclusion, as it does not explain to schools, head teachers or teachers how to improve parental partnership, as an important factor of successful inclusion. In contrast, the GIRFEC approach ensures that, "anyone providing that support puts the child or young person and their family at the centre" (Scottish Government, 2012, p.3). (The effects of this gap in the Kuwaiti policy, on practice as well as the perspectives of parents towards inclusion, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six).

it could be argued that the international documents and policy imperatives (e.g., Salamanca Statement, (UNESCO, 1994)), proclaiming the rights of disabled children to be educated with their peers in mainstream settings, have influenced the

existence of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education. However, policy language and the actual practice in schools does not reflect the ethos of inclusive education, because *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* has failed to cover and promote the basic requirements, such as well-being, for all children. It could be argued that a successful policy of inclusive education is one which allocates the well-being of all children as a top priority. As Liasidou (2008, p.493) states, "the essence of an inclusive policy is concerned with the education and well-being of all students", by contrast GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.10) emphasises that:

All agencies in touch with children and young people must play their part in making sure that young people are healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and above all, safe.

The subsequent inclusion attempts and the legislative shifts towards inclusive education in Kuwait are disjointed, which could be a result merely from the necessity to align Kuwait with international inclusive education policy-making trends. Armstrong et al. (2010, p.46) state that:

It could be argued that it is very easy for member countries of the United Nations to verbally express commitment to the concept of Education for All as a worthwhile and noble endeavor. Yet it is altogether another matter for the ideal of Education for all to be transformed into a realistic and achievable goal for countries.

Analysis of the policy document *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*, relating to inclusive education in Kuwait, suggests that it supports segregation/integration rather than inclusion through creating special classes in mainstream schools, in an attempt to implement inclusion. The Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education considers inclusion as the transfer of "slow learners" from mainstream classes to special classes. Arguably, the policy of inclusion increases its opposite by promoting exclusionary practices.

The current Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education does not reflect the concept of inclusion, as understood in the Salamanca Statement, because it emphasises the physical location of "slow learners" in special classes in mainstream schools, while the key values and principles of inclusion are misrepresented. This is also in contrast with other policies that support inclusion, such as GIRFEC (Scottish

Government, 2012, p.7), where "Promoting the same values across all working relationships" is one of the key values and principles that is encouraged indicating that "Recognising respect, patience, honesty, reliability, resilience and integrity are qualities valued by children, young people, their families and colleagues". Thus, it could be claimed that the silencing of the inclusive education discourse is noticeable because the main focus of the Kuwaiti policy is only on the process of transferring "slow learners" from mainstream classes to special classes. The policy simply explains the assessment of and diagnostic process for "slow learners", special classes' conditions, and qualifications of teaching staff of these special classes. Article (8) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that, "the recruitment priority is for the person to have postgraduate qualifications in the field of special education needs". It does not involve any discourse concerning the social aspects of inclusion, whereas, "Maximizing the interaction between pupils with and without special needs is generally considered an important aspect of inclusion" (Koster et al., 2009, p.117). It could be argued that this process is translated into an expansion of special education provision. This is consistent with Armstrong et al. (2010, p.35) who argue that, "Not everything that is called and presented as "inclusive" may actually be experienced as inclusive, precisely because different understandings of inclusion are employed".

Regulation of law 4 of 1996, creation of special classes in mainstream schools, does not meet such a definition of a policy of inclusion. Farrell and Ainscow (2002, p.3) indicate that for inclusion to be effective, all students, "must actively belong to, be welcomed by, and participate in a mainstream school and community". The special classes in Kuwait do not meet these criteria and are more consistent with integration, as understood by Ainscow (1995); integration is about making a limited number of additional arrangements for disabled students in schools which remain largely unchanged. The Kuwaiti policy still adopts the integration ethos rather than the inclusion ethos. Brown (2005, p.263) states that in Kuwait inclusive education has:

Occurred through the addition of special education classes for children officially categorized as slow learners and for certain other categories (e.g. Down's Syndrome). They are located in separate units of regular government schools, and are described as inclusive because they are not located in special centres.

However, the aim of inclusion is not only the attendance of disabled students in mainstream schools, alongside their peers. Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.1) state that the aim of inclusive education is also to:

Eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

Social culture in the context of Kuwait

Armstrong et al. (2010, p.48) indicate that:

In any society, cultural differences, social and historical experiences, and political pragmatism and principles are each likely to impact upon both policy and practice of inclusion.

A Qur'anic perspective suggests that Muslims form an inclusive community with members providing support and kindness accordingly, consequently education should embrace individuals with various disabilities and remove any stigma and obstacles to full inclusion of disabled people (Aldaihani, 2010) (this collectivist nature of Islamic society is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six). In this sense, the Qur'an aims to remove any sort of discrimination, whether physical, mental, or social, against disabled or disadvantaged people stating that, "O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them" (Al-Hujurat:11). Islam emphasises that all people, regardless of their abilities, have equal rights, stating that the needs of disabled people need to be met and respected. However, such Islamic perspectives do not shape the policy of inclusive education in Kuwait. Bazna and Hatab (2005, p.1) indicate that:

The concept of disability, in the conventional sense, is not found in the Qur'an. Rather, the Qur'an concentrates on the notion of disadvantage that is created by society and imposed on those individuals who might not possess the social, economic, or physical attributes that people happen to value at a certain time and place. The Qur'an places the responsibility of rectifying this inequity on the shoulder of society by its constant exhortation to Muslims to recognize the plight of the disadvantaged and to improve their condition and status.

It is worth mentioning that although international discourse on inclusion encourages principles that are similar to those promoted by Islam in articulating the policy of inclusive education, emphasising the rights of children with disability in inclusive schools, such as celebrating diversity, cooperation and team work (see Table 4.1) are neglected in the Kuwaiti policy document. There are important and vital differences between the ways in which international policy is implemented at national levels. For example, the very first paragraph of GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.3) emphasises the importance of protecting the rights of children and families in Scotland, stating that:

We want all our children and young people to be fully supported as they grow and develop into successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. We believe they should be safe healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included. As children and young people progress on their journey through life, some may have temporary difficulties, some may live with challenges and some may experience more complex issues. Sometimes they – and their families – are going to need help and support. No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children, young people and their families should always know where they can find help, what support might be available and whether that help is right for them.

These issues are not mentioned in Kuwaiti policy, which is concerned only about the placement of those children in special classes in mainstream schools. Brown (2005) argues that a culture that is motivated to assist individuals with a disability rather than forcing them to engage in activities directed towards achieving independence does not quite understand or accept the concept of independent mobility; this reflects the way in which traditional thinking contradicts the spirit and intent of human rights legislation in these countries. The "rights discourse" of inclusion, adopted in several international documents, such as the ones mentioned above, is not adopted in the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education. (The absence of equal rights discourse and its effects on the practice of inclusion in Kuwait will be discussed in Chapter Six)

Furthermore, Aldaihani (2010) argues that in Kuwait, the lack of knowledge of the Islamic perspective on disability has led to the adoption of exclusion as a modern concept, which has benefited individuals with disability by providing them every kind of "special" care without thinking of its negative aspects. This has been

enhanced by the collectivist culture, which creates a charitable and overprotective environment that emphasises dependency but embraces the adoption of the medical model of disability (Aldaihani, 2010; Brown, 2005). However, Islam does not support the medical model of understanding disability, as indicated in Hadith mentioned in Sahih Muslim, that "Verily Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your faces but He looks into your hearts" (32, 6220). Such Hadith clearly encourages avoiding focusing on the deficit and the impairment of other people and considers them simply as part of the human condition.

Categorisation, as another consequence of the medical model and its associated practices and language, acts as a barrier to the development of a broader view of inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006); a situation which is particularly true within the socio-cultural context of Kuwait. However, inclusion in Kuwait is implemented on a very limited basis and for only some categories of students with disability, i.e. "slow learners" and those with Down's Syndrome. Brown (2005, p.255) states that in the Arabian Gulf region:

Practices associated with the concept of educational inclusion are only beginning to emerge. Evidence of its occurrence is found only for categories of disabled, who are least likely to be perceived as 'handicapped'.

It could be suggested that the way the view of disabled students is constructed in the context of Kuwait, which is affected by the medical model of understanding disability, determines who is included and who is excluded. An analysis of the policy clearly indicates that policy makers see inclusion as suitable for students with disability who are physically and mentally more capable of being included and can be accommodated with minimal change in the context of mainstream school. "Slow learners" and those with Down's Syndrome are the only two categories of students that are identified to be included in mainstream schools, while other students, with disability, are still excluded in special schools.

Kearney and Kane (2006, p.206), who studied inclusive education policy in New Zealand, argue that successful implementation of inclusive education would require a different knowledge base than that of traditional special educational paradigms, claiming that:

Defining disability or difficulty as something inherent within the student (with no regard to the part played by environments, attitudes and cultures in the disablement of individuals) has a tendency to absolve those working with the student of any responsibility to meet their needs.

The social and cultural beliefs in defining disability, and individuals with special needs in the region, is consistent with the assumptions of the medical model and contribute to the existing exclusionary policy language and practices for "slow learners" in mainstream schools. This is also true for other students with physical impairments, who are mentally capable of being included but are excluded from mainstream schools in Kuwait.

Liasidou (2008, p.483) argues that, "Local cultures, language and ideological dynamics infiltrate and eventually domesticate inclusive educational policies". The collectivist culture in Kuwait suggests that families are responsible for caring for their child or children with disability. Sometimes, families prefer to care for their disabled children instead of sending them to educational institutions. Moreover, a culture that emphasises dependency might underestimate children's abilities (Aldaihani, 2010). It could be argued that such cultural aspects may strongly affect the policy makers of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. Brown (2005) states that in the Middle East, traditional powers have worked to both protect and care for the disabled, nevertheless they have maintained psychosocial borders that prevent them from being integrated into the larger society, which has led to the cautious and hesitant emergence of inclusive thinking.

Gaps and limitations in the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait

Pijl et al. (1998) articulate that a well-formulated policy statement for inclusion needs to clarify the goals of education, assuring that local policy-makers, school principals and teachers understand the government's expectations. Developing a clear policy in any field strongly affects the success of the practice of such a field. Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.23) propose that:

As policy texts emerge with greater clarity this in turn shapes the organizational principles, and ultimately the operational practices, that shape the experience of policy at an institutional level.

Thus, the Salamanca Statement argues for all governments to give the highest policy

and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to facilitate the inclusion of all children, regardless of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994). However, the current policy document on inclusive education in Kuwait has limitations, in a number of important aspects. Thus, it is of major importance to highlight the absences or silences in the text, as identified by Taylor (2004, p.444) as the "marginalized discourses" of the policy text. The Salamanca Statement encourages governments to consider several factors when building their policy on inclusive education. Table 4.1 highlights some of the aspects from the Salamanca Statement and GIRFEC that are not invoked and are marginalised in Kuwaiti policy relating to inclusive education. In addition, some religious texts are highlighted with the aim to show that Islamic principles do not influence the policy related to inclusive education in Kuwait.